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THIS BOOK PRESENTED BY  
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385



Wm.

from his father

Saml. Wood

New York June 1818—





STRENGTH IN WEAKNESS  
MANIFEST:  
IN THE  
LIFE,  
VARIOUS TRIALS,  
AND  
*Good*  
**CHRISTIAN TESTIMONY**

OF THAT  
FAITHFUL SERVANT AND HANDMAID  
OF THE LORD,  
ELIZABETH STIRREDGE,

Who departed this life, at her house at Hemstead in  
Hertfordshire, in the 72d year of her age.

*Written by her own hand.*

Shewing her pious care and counsel to her children,  
and according to their desire made public: also for  
the instruction and benefit of many other parents  
and children concerned.

Prov. xxxi. 30. *A woman that feareth the Lord, she shall  
be praised.*

PHILADELPHIA:

Published by Benjamin & Thomas Kite, No. 20,  
North Third Street.

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1810.

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## PREFACE.

*Concerning the* **AUTHOR**, *and following*  
*book.*

AS the memory of the just is blessed, so there is a justice due to their memories, who walked in the path of the just, (which is as a shining light) and are the blessed who die in the Lord, who rest from their labours, and their works follow them to their everlasting reward in the kingdom of Heaven : or, for the example and admonition of them they leave behind. And that is either by publishing their own memoirs of their lives (when they leave any) which is instructing, and often not the least edifying ; or else by supplying that, where wanting, in commemorating them otherwise, according to the example of holy scripture, even concerning women as well as men ; the first

of which is done in the following relation, written by an early disciple of Christ in this Gospel-day, of her labours in it, and sufferings for it, and so the less need of the latter, viz. to say much of the author ; her own book being a sufficient memorial of her, and what she was in her day ; only as a necessary introduction to her own account, I have this in short to premise concerning her.

I knew her, and was acquainted with her many years, being my country-woman ; and I have this testimony lives in my heart concerning her, that she was a religiously exercised woman, always seeking the best things, and through the goodness of God, found him whom her soul loved. An honest, sincere, tender-hearted zealous woman for God, and underwent many deep exercises inwardly, and also outwardly, by reason of contrary spirits, who opposed the work of the Lord, and testimony of truth in his servants and handmaids ; with whom she was often concerned, and bore a faithful testimony as the Lord laid it upon her, and made

## PREFACE.

v

way for her, being a serious, weighty concerned woman in her spirit, a true mourner in Sion, for the abominations of the times, and she had a solid savory testimony for the truth, which she received early, and was faithful and diligent in it according to her gift, and was well received and esteemed for her service by the honest-hearted in and about Bristol, and Chew-magna in the county of Somerset, where, and in the countries adjacent, her service mostly lay; till she, and her husband and family, removed to Hemstead in Hartfordshire, in the year 1688, where she was well received, as by the following testimonies appear. And she used to come to my house at London, when she came to the Yearly-meeting, and I was often comforted in her savory testimony, and to find that the Lord's presence was so fresh with her, in her latter days; and after several years abode at Hemstead, and labour and service there, and thereaway, she died in the Lord, and laid down her head in peace, in a good old age, in the

year 1706, and 72d of her age, and is undoubtedly entered into rest.

And as for the following papers written with her own hand, in relation to her life, labours, travels, exercises, trials, service and sufferings, with desire they should be published after her decease, for the benefit of her children, and others; they were some time since put into my hand to peruse, as falling mostly within the compass of my knowledge; especially that part in relation to her sufferings and imprisonment at Ivelchester (I being then a prisoner there for the testimony of truth) in the time of the great imprisonment for meetings, &c. in the year 1683, she being taken at meeting at Chew-magna, with near thirty more, and sent to prison by that wicked persecutor (and under-sheriff of the county) John Helliard of Bristol, at the instigation of the priest of the parish; both of whom were soon after cut off by death. The said priest Cross immediately thereupon in a very remarkable manner, as is herein related, and the said Helliard smitten with great terror, and horror of

mind for the violence he had committed on the people of God in that city &c. keeping men to watch with him night and day, for fear the devil would fetch him away ; as I have been credibly informed he expressed. As another great persecutor there (R. Oliffe) who had much spoil on the said people, as I heard, crying out he was damned, and that they should make restitution, i. e. to them he had wronged, which he was never able to do ; and so both died miserably, and several others.

Such a thrifty trade (says one) is persecution, that it leaves men never a friend in heaven, or on earth. Oh, that others would take warning in time by such examples of divine vengeance, to avoid such things, and do no more so wickedly. For as the memory of the just is blessed, and the righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance ; so the name of the wicked shall rot ; and wherever Helliars name is mentioned it stinks, as all persecutors do.



And according to desire, I have for the truths' sake, and the respect I had to her, and owe to her memory, carefully perused and put in order the following relation; which I have been comforted in reading of, being very solid, serious, weighty matter of experience, warning, exhortation and counsel, written in a good sense and understanding of the things of God, and mysteries of his kingdom, and very sound and savory in the expression of it. To which is added a short supplement of the last fourteen years of her life; collected chiefly from her son's account; with an epistle to friends, and a warning to others, formerly printed; all which I doubt not will answer in every conscience of such as read it in the fear of God: and hope it may be of service to her posterity, and benefit to others; and that it will tend to the glory of God, and the comfort and edification of his people; to whose perusal in much love and sincerity I recommend it, and all to the grace of God, which is able to build them up,



and give them an inheritance among them  
that are sanctified ; which is the sincere  
desire of, reader,

Thy real friend,

*John Whiting.*

London, the 21st, of the  
2d, Month, 1711.



*A testimony from several friends belonging to the meeting at Hemel, Hemstead, and the parts adjacent, in the county of Hartford, concerning E. Stirredge, the 8th of the 3d, Month, 1711.*

OUR dear friends James and Elizabeth Stirredge, came here to inhabit about the year 1688, whose coming into these parts was seasonable, and we believe ordered by the good providence of God ; for it had a good tendency to the strength and edification of friends ; for about that time some were busy to weaken love among brethern, under specious pretences of liberty, &c. But the said Elizabeth being gifted for the ministry, and acquainted with the wiles and subtle devices of the enemy, was made a serviceable instrument in our defence and

preservation; being attended with power, wisdom, and true zeal for the prosperity of the truth and people of God. She was sound and savory in her doctrine and public ministry, and tender and affectionate in christian advice and counsel, to the comfort of the afflicted and exercised in spirit, declaring, that the way to the kingdom of God is through tribulation, agreeably to the ancient account we read of in holy scripture. And she did frequently press friends to sincerity and uprightness of heart. And although the Lord had given her a large gift, and a good utterance, she was not forward to appear in her public service; but as an immediate concern came upon her. She was a good example in her frequenting meetings, both on the first and week-days, and was there often made instrumental to the stirring up of the pure minds of many, by way of remembrance, to our mutual comfort, by her fresh and living testimony.

Her husband also (who departed this life some time since her decease,) was an

honest zealous friend, and her fellow-helper in the work of the Lord, (in his proper gift) and our true friend and brother; and they were both very near and acceptable to friends, here, and here-away. But what shall we say? (The Lord hath called them to his rest in a good old age) but earnestly desire, as they frequently did, that the young generation might come up in faithfulness, and fill up the room of all such (being thereunto spirited by the Lord) that his name may be more and more known, and glorified to all succeeding generations,—Amen.

Our said friend Elizabeth Stirredge, departed this life at Hemstead aforesaid, on the 7th, of the 9th, Month, 1706, and was buried in friends' burying ground at Wood-end, in the said parish.

*John Edmonds,  
Moses West,  
Edmond Neale,*

*Michael Turpin,  
Mich. Turpin, Junr.  
James Stirredge.*

*John Thornton's account of his neighbour,  
Elizabeth Stirredge.*

I HAVING opportunity by dwelling in Hemstead several years before she departed this life, had an intimate acquaintance with her; and as the Lord had given her a measure of the holy spirit, to guide, lead, and direct her in the way of peace; he also gave her a large talent in a public testimony, in which she was very serviceable in our meetings; being attended with power, wisdom and true zeal; so that her testimony was sound and savory to the comforting of the upright-hearted; she being many times drawn forth to encourage the exercised and afflicted in spirit, and led to declare that the way to the kingdom of God is through tribulations. And also would frequently press friends to upright-heartedness, sincerity and integrity. She being also a good example in her conversation. And although the Lord had given her a large gift in a verbal testimony, yet she was backward to appear therein, except she

found it was immediately required of her. She was zealously concerned against that spirit that led into separation and division, and also against all manner of deceit and hypocrisy. She commonly had a sharp and piercing testimony against such that the great enemy had so misled. She was a diligent frequenter of meetings, both on first and week days. Her husband also being an honest and zealous friend, and since her departed this life; they being both serviceable to truth and Friends, are missed. But what shall I say, the will of God be done; for fully satisfied am I, that they are gone to rest, and entered into joy and happiness, where all sorrows cease, and tears are wiped away.

*John Thornton.*



*John Neale's testimony concerning Elizabeth Stirredge.*

IT is in my mind to write something as a testimony concerning my dear and

well beloved friend Elizabeth Stirredge, deceased.

She was one who received the truth in the love of it in her young years, as I have heard from her own mouth, as in her following book is more fully related, wherefore I need say no more of that, but descend to write something concerning her, during the time of my acquaintance with her, which was about fifteen years.

She lived for that time about seven miles from us, and sometimes would come to visit our meeting at Watford, whom I and many more were glad to see, she being one whom the Lord was pleased to bestow a talent and gift of the ministry upon, (which he is pleased to give unto both male and female, they being all one in Christ Jesus,) that she might tell unto others, what God had done for her soul; for those, and those only, are they whose mouths the Lord openeth, that do and shall shew forth his praise. And indeed her testimony was reaching and affecting; my heart hath been well



affected many times in meeting with her testimony, for she spoke as one having authority, almost to admiration, considering the weakness of body wherewithal she was pretty much afflicted ; but the Lord was with her, who giveth strength to the weak, and his power was her support.

It was her lot many times when she came to our meeting, to lodge at my house, (my dear mother Hannah Neale and she being very intimate friends, and heartily loving each others company) and indeed her company I also loved, for it was pleasant and delightful to the honest-hearted. And I may say, her discourse was edifying to me.

And I have been affected to hear her give an account of the sufferings, deep trials and exercises of friends, which she, and many others went through in early days ; how when they were going to a meeting, they went as it were in peril of their lives, by reason of wicked and ungodly people throwing stones, clods, and other things at them. And although many

were they that rose up against them, yet how wonderfully did the Lord preserve his people in that day, through many tribulations; many of which various exercises and trials that divers of our worthy ancients passed through, blessed be the Lord, we in this our day are freed from.

Much might be said concerning this our friend: but in short she was a valiant woman for truth on earth, a mother in Israel, and a worthy faithful elder in the church of Christ in her time.

And now my desire is, that we who are of a younger generation, and are yet left behind, may in our measure be found treading in the steps of this, and many others of our ancients, who have served the Lord faithfully in their generation, and are removed from us.

Though our loss of such worthies be great; for doubtless they are entered into those mansions of eternal bliss, where joy unspeakable and full of glory is their portion, and that for evermore.

*John Neale.*

*Concerning her husband, James Stirredge,  
by the same hand.*

HE was a man with whom I was well acquainted for many years; and I may say of him, he was an honest upright-hearted man, one that feared God, and eschewed evil; zealous for the honour of God and for the promotion of his truth on earth; a hearty lover of faithful friends, and in his conversation amongst men, I think I may say, blameless.

A zealous man for monthly and quarterly meetings of church-government; his desire was, that friends in such meetings, might so wait upon the Lord, to receive counsel from him, as that they might act in the wisdom of God, that every thing that is contrary to the principle of truth might be kept out of them, and that nothing but truth might have the pre-eminence.

In fine, he was a meek-spirited and lowly-minded man, more in substance than in shew.

I went to visit him in his last illness, when he was very weak in body, so weak, that he spake very low, but very sensible, and was in a good frame of mind and spirit; so that I was refreshed in my visit, and he was pleased to see me.

He was very patient under his affliction, and I believe was fully resigned to the will of God.

He departed this life in the 8th Month, 1708, at Hemstead in Hertfordshire, and was buried at friends' burying-ground at Wood-end, in the same county.

*John Neale.*

*Strength in Weakness,*

*Manifested, &c.*

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SEEING the Lord hath been pleased to count me worthy to travel in Sion's way; and seeing I have found the way so straight, and so narrow, and so many that have been called, and some that have entered into it, have gone into byepaths, and crooked ways again; and I have found the blessed effect of keeping in the right way: therefore I have a great concern upon my spirit for my children, that are coming up after me that they may not be forgetful of keeping in the right way, whensoever the Lord shall be pleased to take me from them.

Therefore it is in my heart, as my heavenly Father will be pleased to assist me,

to leave a short testimony behind me, for my children, of the passages of my life, ever since I had a remembrance; and the goodness of the Lord to me all my life long, unto this very day, which is worthy for ever to be had in remembrance, above all that ever my eyes beheld, and in reverence to the worthy name and power of the Lord is it spoken, and he shall have the praise of his own work for ever.

1634. In the first place, I was born at Thornbury in Gloucestershire of honest parents; my father's name was William Tayler; my father and mother were people fearing God, and very zealous in their day; and my father (being one of those called Puritans) prophesied of friends many years before they came; he said, "there was a day coming, wherein truth will gloriously break forth, more glorious than ever since the apostles days, but (said) I shall not live to see it;" but died in the faith of it seven years before they came: whose honest and chaste life is often in my remembrance, and his fervent and zealous prayers amongst his family, are

not forgotten by me. My parents brought me up after a very strict manner, so that I can truly say, I was much a stranger unto the world, and its ways. In my tender years I was one of a sad heart, and much concerned and surprized with inward fear what would become of me when I should die : and when my lot was to be near any that would talk rudely, or swear, or be overcome with strong drink, I dreaded to pass by them ; and when I heard it thunder, oh the dread and terror that would fall upon me ; and I would get the most private place that I could to mourn in secret, thinking the Lord would render vengeance upon the heads of the wicked. When I saw the flashes of lightning, oh, thought I, whither shall I go to hide myself from the wrath of the dreadful and terrible God. Thus was I possessed with my soul's concern ; before I was ten years of age, I was so filled with fears and doubts that I could take no delight in any thing of this world. And when I grew up to riper years, I went to hear them accounted the best



men, that lived up to what was made known unto them, and I delighted to hear them, and be in company with them that talked of good things, and discoursed of scripture, and of God and Christ, and of heaven's glory; oh! how delightful, was it unto me; but still I was unsatisfied, because I found I was not a living witness of these states and conditions that the people of God were in, in former days; and how to attain unto it I did not know. Then did I mourn unto myself, and say in my heart, oh, that I had been born in the days when the Lord spake unto Moses, and unto the children of Israel, and with a high and wonderful power brought forth his people out of Egypt, and through the Red Sea, that I might have known how to have walked in the right way, and to have done what the Lord would have required of me, and been in acquaintance and familiarity with my maker; that I might have known when I had pleased or displeased the Lord, whom my soul loved, but knew not how to become acquainted with him.



Oh! what would I have parted with for the enjoyment of the Lord, and assurance of salvation? surely if it were possible for me to have enjoyed all the world, I could freely have parted with it, for peace, comfort, and satisfaction for my poor distressed soul, that mourned as without hope; and many a time, and many hours have I been alone, reading and mourning, when no eye saw me, nor ear heard me, neither could I find comfort in reading, because it was a book sealed unto me. Then did I mourn, and say, Oh! that I had been born in the days when our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ was upon the earth; how would I have followed him, and sat at his feet, as Mary did; how freely could I have left my father's house, and all my relations, for true peace and assurance of life eternal for my immortal soul.

And under this exercise I grew very sad, insomuch that my mother feared I was going into a consumption, and greatly feared my death; and would say

unto me, "Canst thou take delight in nothing? I would have thee walk forth into the fields with the young people, for recreation, and delight thyself in something." And to please her, I have sometimes, when we were out of our employment, gone forth with sober young people, but I found no comfort in that. Then I fell into a custom of reading the scriptures, and to be alone in private, reading, and crying, because I knew not that heavenly power and spirit to have dominion in me, that was in them that gave forth the scriptures; and nothing else but the substance would give me true satisfaction: therefore the scripture was but a book sealed unto me.

Then did I fall down upon my knees, to pray unto the Lord, with my heart full of sorrow, and the tears running down my face, and could not utter one word; which seemed very strange unto me, and set me a thinking, that there was none like unto me. But it was the enemy's work to persuade me, there was none like unto me: and because I could

not pray in words, as others could, and likewise under afflictions, therefore the Lord had no regard unto me. But the enemy is a liar as ever, for the Lord was near me in every exercise, and broke my heart, and melted my spirit, or else it would not have been so with me. Oh! my soul can now behold his goodness, for he was near me, although I was not aware of it; for I thought none were so miserable as I, the enemy endeavouring to cast me down, and to make me despair. And truly it was the great mercy of the Lord in preserving me from it, for my affliction was great, and my distresses very many; and the enemy following me with his temptations, and for want of right information where my strength was to be found; which was to have stood still, and have waited upon the living God for strength to overcome my soul's enemy. And instead of so doing, the enemy so disturbed me, and so followed me with his subtle allurements; sometimes to draw my mind into the vanities of this world, and to delight myself in

bedecking myself in fine clothes, that I might appear comely in the eyes of the world; for, said the enemy, as for this way of sadness and trouble that thou art under, it will redound to no advantage, benefit, nor comfort, thou wilt not be in any esteem amongst thy neighbours, therefore, take thy pleasure, and be at rest. A liar he is, and ever was from the beginning; and my dear children, believe him not, if it be your lots to be under temptations, or exercise of any kind; or what way soever the Lord may be pleased to lead you in, for the trial of your faith and patience in any kind, either now, or any time of your pilgrimage in this life. I say the enemy will betray as many as he can, therefore look unto the Lord, and keep him in your remembrance, and pray unto him in the inward of your minds, although you cannot utter one word, know assuredly, that he is near to help his afflicted children at all times, as they stand in need of him. Oh! that I had known this in the days of my ignorance, and in my

young and tender years, when the Lord was near me, and at work in my heart, and I knew it not; for want of an understanding, the enemy betrayed me, and led me aside in those things above-named; and by hearkening unto him, and the young people that were my neighbours, in persuading me, that it would be of great benefit to me, for I was young, and knew not what I might come to; and I was left of my tender father, and hardly any friend was left me; and in my distress and afflictions, willing to have a little rest and comfort, I lent an ear unto the enemy of my soul, and let my mind go forth after fine clothes; but when it was drawn out, it went without limit; and when I bedecked myself as fine and as choice as I could, it would hardly give me content; for when I had one new thing, when I saw another, or the third, I was as desirous as for the former, so ever unsatisfied. Oh! the lying enemy, who promised me rest and peace, but could not give it me; a liar he is, and ever was, my soul

hates him, and is at enmity with him, the Lord preserve me out of his snares, and my house also for ever.

But though he had drawn out my mind, the Lord did not leave me; for I had many times a concern upon my mind what would become of me; and if at any time I was drawn out into any mirth or laughter, I would feel something smite my heart, and bring great heaviness over my spirit; but I knew not what it was, and I little thought it was the Lord, who was ever good and gracious, kind, merciful, and slow to anger, and not willing people should run into destruction, nor perish.

I little thought he looked so narrowly to my ways; but since the Lord hath been pleased to open my eyes, I can look back and admire his goodness, and blessed be his worthy name, and the right arm of his strength, who hath early been my guide, and kept me in great part from running into the evil of the world, which greatly attends young people. But blessed be the name of the Lord, he

took me by the hand, and led me when I knew it not, in the days of my tender years ; and if I had not hearkened unto the enemy, my condition had been well. But as soon as he had drawn my mind into pride, and to take delight in fine clothes, it soon became my burden : for in a little time after, the Lord in the riches of his love, was pleased to fit and furnish his faithful servants, and painful labourers, whose industry the Lord greatly prospered, two men of worthy memory dear John Audland and John Camm, in 1654. But when I heard the report of them, it struck a dread over my heart, hearing of their plainness, I began to think, "How shall I demean myself to go to hear them." In a little time after, there was a meeting appointed by them ; where my lot was to be. And dear John Audland was declaring, but as soon as I heard his voice, it pierced me ; and when I came into the meeting, and heard his testimony, and beheld his solid countenance, Oh ! how my heart



was troubled within me, insomuch that I knew not what would become of me.

After meeting was over, I separated myself from my company, and travelled alone two miles, because no ear should hear me, making my moan unto the Lord; and out of the bitterness of my spirit did I say, "Lord, what shall I do to be saved? I would do any thing for assurance of everlasting life : and if the Lord will be pleased to accept of me upon any terms, I matter not what becomes of this outward body, if I could find out a cave of the earth, that I might get into, where I might mourn out the remainder of my days in sorrow, and see man no more." I thought I could have been contented. But it pleased the Lord to open the eyes of my understanding, and to lead me by a way that I knew not, and to begin the first days work in my heart, which was, "the spirit of the Lord to move upon the waters, and to divide the light from the darkness;" and when the separation was made, then could I see my way in the light, which was the "light unto David's



feet, and was a lanthorn unto his paths ;” and it will order every ones goings aright, if they take heed unto it.

It would be too tedious to go through every particular state ; but my earnest cries were unto the Lord, “ to lead me by the right way, and to create in me a new heart, and renew a right spirit within me. Oh ! let me be unto thee, O Lord, what I am, and not unto man ; and I do not take care for this outward body, do but redeem my soul from death, and out of this horrible pit, wherein I am held as in chains of darkness, and shall perish for ever, if thou dost not, out of thy infinite mercy have compassion on me, and bow thy ears unto my cries, for I can do nothing else. (For I can truly say,) my heart was filled with sorrow, my sighing came before I eat, and tears were as my sorrowful meat ; when I lay down, it was in sorrow, and watered my pillow with my tears, before I could take my rest : and when I awaked, it was with the dread of the Lord over my heart.

Oh! my soul can do no less than magnify the living God, who is worthy of praise, honour and renown, thanksgiving and obedience for evermore. And why so? Because he hath condescended unto the lowest estate of his hand-maid, and bowed his ear unto my prayers, and had a regard unto my cries, and hath answered my request, and given me my heart's desire, which was to be led the right way. And Sion's poor travellers know very well this is a beginning, or a step in the way, for I can truly say, "that I never coveted heaven's glory, nor to be made a partaker of the riches, glory, and everlasting well-being forever, more than I desired to walk in the way that leads thereunto." And I did as truly believe, that the Lord would redeem a people out of the world, and its ways, and customs, language, marriage, and burying, and all the world's hypocrisy. I looked for this change, before I saw any appearance of it; but all my fear was, I should not live to see it; the enemy always following of me with his temptations, to work

me into unbelief, and to cast me down into desparation. Oh, my soul cannot but give the Lord God the glory, the honour and the renown, for he is worthy of it forever, and evermore.

And now my dear children, this is for you to remember, and keep by you, that ye may always know the way to heaven's glory, to enjoy true peace and satisfaction ; it is a straight and narrow way, whoever thinks it not they are mistaken. Therefore, my dear children, keep unto the daily cross all the days of your lives ; and to truth's language : and more especially keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life ; then will you be brought nearer and nearer unto the Lord, and grow into a acquaintance with him ; which was that my soul mourned for in the days of my tender years, which I cannot forget, nor I hope ever shall, for I find the good effects of it from day to day, it bows my spirit, and humbles my heart, and keeps me in a living remembrance of what the Lord has done for me ; though the Lord

hath been pleased to give me the waters of a bitter cup to drink, and to feed me with bread of affliction, and suffer temptation upon temptation to come near me, and the enemy, the subtle serpent, the old dragon, which was more subtle than all the beasts of the field, following me with his lies, to persuade me that the Lord had no regard to me ; if he had, he would not take delight to afflict me ; “ for there is none like thee, (said the wicked one,) thou mayest look abroad, and see where thou canst find one whose sorrows are like unto thine.”

Then would I wander alone in some remote place, where no eye could see me, nor ear hear me, to make my moan unto the Lord who hath sweetly comforted me, and refreshed my spirit many a time, and hath kept my head above the waters, blessed be the worthy name of the Lord my God, and the right arm of his strength, that hath wrought wonderfully for my deliverance; and cursed is the old dragon, who ever envied man's prosperity, and to destroy the blessed work of the Lord, as

much as in him lieth. For after the Lord had done much for me, and in a good measure had redeemed my soul from death, and by a high hand and stretched out arm, had brought me out of Egypt's darkness, and through the Red Sea, where my soul had true cause to sing praises unto the most high God, who lives for ever, and for evermore. Oh ! let me never forget so great and wonderful deliverance, but forever keep in that which will bow my heart from day unto day, and humble my spirit before the Lord, who hath been pleased to do more for me than my tongue is able to declare, and although I can say mine eyes have seen afflictions, and no affliction seem joyous but grievous for the present, yet afterwards it brings forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness.

And now, my dear children, my very aim and end is to make you a little acquainted with the work of the Lord in my heart, and also with the subtle devices, and contrivances of the enemy of your immortal souls ; his way is to set his baits

according unto peoples nature, for therein he is most likely to prevail; and because I was of a sad heart, and very subject to be cast down, therefore did he with all his might endeavour to cast me down into despair and unbelief; persuading of me, I should never hold out unto the end. Then would I mourn to the Lord, to preserve me to the end, for my affliction was very great, both inward and outward, and many things he cast before me, that seemed too hard for me to go through; when my mind was filled with sorrow, the enemy got ground upon me, and filled my heart with thoughts and imaginations, until my heart grew hard before I was aware of it, and I had lost that sweet enjoyment and heavenly fellowship that I was comforted with in the night season, and in the morning light, I had great cause to magnify the worthy name of the Lord, who was pleased to comfort my afflicted soul; but when the enemy had gotten a little ground upon me, he set his baits so agreeable unto my nature, which was apt to be cast down. And when I had any thing struggling in me in



remembrance of my state and condition I was in a little before, and now for a little time I had lost it; I had great cause to mourn unto the Lord, who was able to deliver me, as he had done many times, blessed be his holy name, and the right arm of his strength, which lives forever, and though he was able to do it, yet the enemy prevailed upon me a little further: for when I was in my mournful estate, making my moan unto the Lord, saying in my heart, there's no sorrow like mine. And why none like thine? because I had lost my beloved, and my loss was great: he that had redeemed my soul from death and had done well for me; oh! I could do no less but mourn for him. And in this time of mourning, which was a state very suitable unto my condition, had I been wary of that subtle serpent who was too hard for me, in persuading of me I was discontented, a murmurer, and complainer, and I made the Lord weary with my crying, and I should be shut out of his kingdom; for it was the murmurers and complainers that perished in the wilderness.



Oh, how soon was I caught by his subtilty, for he infused in me, and persuaded me it was in vain to strive any longer, for I should never inherit the kingdom of heaven. But a liar he was, and ever will be, my soul is at enmity with him: the Lord in whom I trust, preserve me, and my house forever. As it pleased my heavenly father (who had a regard unto me) to make way for me to escape; for in a little time after, it was my lot to be at a meeting, where a faithful servant of the Lord was, by name William Dewsbery, whose testimony was mostly unto the distressed and afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted; which state many were in, in that day, 1655. A true messenger he was unto many. I was 21 years of age when I was in this condition; but after meeting was ended, I dreaded to go unto him, for I thought that he was one of great discerning, and he would be sensible of the hardness of my heart; and if he should judge me, I should not be able to bear it: but yet I could not go away in peace,

until I had been with him. Who seeing me coming so heavily on, held up his hand ; and with a raised voice said unto me, " Dear lamb, judge all thoughts and believe, for blessed are they that believe and see not." And with a raised voice again said, " They were blessed that saw and believed, but more blessed are they that believed and saw not."

Oh ! he was one that had good tidings for me in that day, and great power was with his testimony at that very time ; for the hardness was taken away, and my heart was opened by that ancient power that opened the heart of Lydia ; everlasting praises be given unto him that sits upon the throne for ever, who hath preserved me out of the snares, and subtle contrivances of the adversary.

And now, my dear children, you have been brought up in the way of truth, it is made known unto you ; and my soul cannot but bless and praise the Lord my God, who hath preserved me out of the evil of the world ; therefore trust in his name, and believe, that he will keep you

unto the end ; which he will assuredly do, if you depart not from him ; which I hope you will not whilst you have a day to live ; and my prayers are both night and day for you.

I can truly say, that when any of our family have gone out of our habitation (though upon outward occasions) my prayers have ascended unto the Lord for their preservation ; and unto this day the Lord hath heard, blessed be his name that lives for ever. For you may well remember the many dangers you have been preserved out of, that have been likely to hazard your lives, but the Lord of his infinite goodness hath hitherto preserved you all, that you may serve him. Therefore, dear children, forget not your duty unto the Lord, and the counsel that Jesus Christ gave unto his disciples, which was, to watch and pray, that you may be preserved out of all dangers both inward and outward, which you may be liable to fall into, if you do not keep unto the guide of your youth : but if you keep unto him, he

will never depart from you; and “keep in remembrance your Creator in the days of your youth;” then will he keep you in the hour of temptation, and he will take care for you; if you “seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and other things shall be added unto you;” he hath spoken that cannot lie, therefore put your trust in him for ever. Then will my heavenly father do for you, as he hath done for me, in the days of my tender years, he took me by the hand, and led me by a way I knew not, and made darkness light before me; and hath preserved me unto this very day in covenant with himself; everlasting praises and honour be given unto his holy name for ever, saith my soul.

Now, my dear children, you may remember since you have had an understanding, the many straits and difficulties the Lord hath enabled me to go through for these many years, though but weak, and greatly afflicted with sickness, and very near the grave many times, and the Lord renewed my strength

again, to bear many a faithful testimony for the Lord, and his blessed truth; many various straits and hardships hath the Lord my Redeemer brought me through, which when I look back and consider, I am filled with admiration, in consideration how my soul hath escaped to this very day. But this saying of Christ Jesus often comes before me, "That greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world;" and said to his disciples, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." This hath been a comfort to me many times, and I often remember a saying of a faithful servant and minister of Jesus Christ, whose name was Miles Halhead, when I was 21 years of age, and under great exercise, he stedfastly looking upon me, said, "Dear child, if thou continue in truth, thou wilt make an honourable woman for the Lord; for the Lord God will honour thee with his blessed testimony." And ten years after, in 1665, he came to my habitation, and said unto me, "My love and life is with thee, and

that for that blessed works' sake that is at work in thee; the Lord God keep thee faithful, for he will require hard things of thee, that thou art not aware of; the Lord give thee strength to perform it, and keep thee faithful to his blessed testimony; my prayers shall be for thee, as often as I remember thee." And soon after that, a great exercise fell upon us, we were exposed to great suffering, and the Lord had opened my mouth in a testimony but a little before; yet I have been concerned, for fear my friends should suffer for me; not for myself; for I could truly say, "My heart was given up to serve the Lord, come what would come." But this was the least of our sorrow, loss of goods, beating, and hurling to and fro, and dragging out of our meeting-house, and many other abuses, which the Lord made us able to go through, and sanctified unto us; and my soul blesseth the Lord, for that he accounted us worthy to suffer for his name sake.

For in the time of suffering, did a selfish separating spirit begin to break forth



amongst us; which added to our affliction and sorrow, more than all our persecutors could do; though we went in great hazard of our lives to our meetings, the informers were so wicked and inhuman, and filled with envy and madness, that they swore, "It was no more sin to kill us, than it was to kill a louse;" and "that they would bathe their swords in our blood," but blessed be the Lord our God that liveth for ever, we were in no wise affrighted at these things, nor concerned at it, for we knew him in whom we had believed, was able to deliver his chosen ones that put their trust in him.

And now, my dear children, some of these things you know, your eyes have seen this when you were young and tender in the beginning of your days; and though but young and tender, yet the Lord kept you from the fear of men. And in this time of great exercise, there fell upon me another greater exercise and travail of spirit, which seemed so strange and so wonderful, that I could not believe that ever the Lord would require



such a service of me that was so weak and contemptible, so unfit and unlikely, my understanding but shallow, and my capacity but mean, and very low and dejected in my own eyes; and looking so much at my insufficiency, made me to strive hard against it; crying oftentimes within myself, "Surely this is something to ensnare me, for the Lord does not require such things of me, seeing there are so many wise and good men, that are more honourable and fitter for such service than I: oh Lord, remove it far from me, and require any thing else of me, that I can better perform."

Thus did I reason and strive against it, till my sorrow was so great, that I knew not whether ever the Lord would accept of me again. Then did I cry unto the Lord again and again, "Lord, if thou hast found me worthy, make my way plain before me, and I will follow thee: for Lord thou knowest that I would not willingly offend thee." But for fear thou wouldst require me to go to the great men of the earth, I know-

ing myself to be of such a weak capacity, I did not think that the Lord would make choice of such a contemptible instrument as I, to leave my habitation, and tender children, that were young and tender, to go to King Charles, which was an hundred miles from my habitation, and with such a plain testimony as the Lord did require of me; which made me go bowed down many months under the exercise of it; and oftentimes strove against it; but I could get no rest, but in giving up to obey the Lord in all things that he required of me; and though it seemed hard and strange unto me, yet the Lord made hard things easy, according to his promise unto me, when I was going from my tender children, and knew not but that my life might have been required for my testimony, it was so plain; and when I looked upon my children, my bowels yearned towards them. The word that ran through me was, "If thou canst believe, thou shalt see all things accomplished, and thou shalt return in peace, and thy reward

shall be with thee." And for ever blessed be the name and power of the Lord, that sustained me in my journey, and gave me strength to do his will, and afforded me his living presence to accompany me, which is the greatest comfort that ever can be enjoyed; and this was my testimony to king Charles the second, in the 11th Month, of the year, 1670.

"This is unto thee, O King, hear what the Lord hath committed unto my charge concerning thee, as thou hast been the cause of making many desolate, so will the Lord lay thee desolate; and as many as have been the cause of the persecuting, and the shedding of the blood of my dear children, in the day when I call all to an account, I will plead with them, saith the Lord; therefore hear and fear the Lord God of heaven and earth, for of his righteous judgments all shall be made partakers; from the king that sitteth upon the throne, to the beggar upon the dunghill."

This testimony I delivered into his hands, with these words in my

mouth, "Hear, oh King, and fear the Lord God of heaven and earth." And I can truly say, that the dread of the Most High God was upon me, that made me to tremble, and great agony was over my spirit; insomuch that paleness came in his face, and with a mournful voice he said, "I thank you good woman." My soul honoureth and magnifieth the name and power of the Lord my God, for keeping me faithful to his blessed testimony, and giving me strength to do his will, and made good his promise, which was, "If I could believe, I should return in peace, and my reward should be with me." So the Lord blessed my going forth, and his presence was with me in my journey, and preserved my family well; and my coming home was with joy and peace in my bosom: everlasting praises, glory and honour be given unto him that sits on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever, and for evermore.

And now, my dear children, this is for you to remember the goodness of the

Lord to his children, that faithfully follow and obey him with their whole hearts, though they may be attended with many weaknesses, and are many times crying unto the Lord, "Oh my weakness, I am not able to go through this great work, neither indeed am I worthy. There are many honourable wise men that thou hast fitted for thy service, that are fitter than I am; and there seemeth so many mountains in my way, and so many difficulties appear in my view, that it appeareth too wonderful for me to go through." And so it was indeed, whilst I gave way to the reasoner, which I have done many times, till my sorrow hath been so great, that I have not known which way to turn; for it hath dimmed my sight, and hurt my life, and plunged my soul into sorrow, whilst I gave way to the reasoning part. But it pleased the Lord to appear in a needful hour, and turned back the enemy of my soul's peace, and shewed unto me, that he would choose the weak, and the dejected, and them that were nothing

in their own eyes, and that could do nothing; no, not so much as to utter a word but what the Lord giveth into their mouths; I mean, in testimony for the living God, that the scripture of truth may be fulfilled in this our day, as fully as it was in times past, that no flesh should glory in his presence. Then did I freely give up to obey the requirings of the Lord with peace and comfort, and received the blessed reward in my bosom, as I have already said, but our exercise continued by our persecutors. But blessed be the name and power of the Lord for his infinite mercies, for according to the day, so was our strength.

A little time after the officers came and demanded money for the king for our meeting together. My husband answered them, "If I owed the king any, I would surely pay him; but seeing I owe him no money, surely I will pay him none." They asked him leave to strain his goods, he said, "If you will take my goods, I cannot hinder you, but I will not give you leave to take them;



neither will I be accessory to your taking of them." Then the officers seeing our innocency (for we were in our shop at our lawful calling, with our hands to our labour, and our children with us) the constable leaning his head down upon his hand, and with a heavy heart, said, "It is against my conscience to take their goods from them." Then I said, John, "have a care of wronging thy conscience; for what could the Lord do more for thee than to place his good spirit in thy heart, to teach thee what thou shouldest do, and what thou shouldest leave undone." He said, "I know not what to do in this matter; if paying the money once would do, I would do it, but it will not end so; but it will be thus, whilst you keep going to meeting; for the rulers have made such laws, that never was the like in any age." I said, John, "When thou hast wronged thy conscience, and brought a burthen upon thy spirit, it is not the rulers can remove it from thee. If thou shouldest go to the rulers, and say, I have done that



which was against my conscience to do," they may say as the rulers did to Judas, "What is that to us, see thou to that."

But the officers that were with him, came and pulled down our goods; but the power of the Lord smote them, insomuch that paleness was in their faces, and their lips quivered, and their hands did so shake, that they could not hold it long. Then they would force a poor man to take them, but he refused, until they forced him, and laid them upon his arms and shoulders; but he, looking much like a dead man, replied, "You force me to do that which you cannot do yourselves, neither can I;" for he trembled very much, though we had not ought farther to say unto them, after they came in, but could rejoice that the Lord had found us worthy to suffer for his blessed truth and testimony.

A little time after, they had a meeting to appraise the goods they took from us, and other friends; where there met together seven men called justices, and

the officers and sheriffs' bailiff, and many more of their confederates, a great room full of them; and I was at work in our shop; and seeing the constable carrying along some of the goods to be appraised, it immediately came into my heart to go after them, not knowing one word that I should have to say; which made me a little consider for what I should go; but it more and more rested with me to go; and when I came within the door, I sat down like one that was a fool, and had not one word to say for a time, as near as I can count the time, half or three parts of an hour. But when I came in, they were greatly disquieted in their minds, and hurried in their business, that they said many times, "That they could do nothing whilst I was with them;" the justices calling one to another to cause me to be taken away many times; saying, "We shall not do any business this day, but spend our time in vain, if this woman sit here." And they many times tempted me to speak what I had to say, and be gone; but could not

prevail with me. Then calling to the man of the house to take me away, solemnly protesting never to come to his house again, if he would not take me away. But the man had not power to touch me, but full of trouble, said, "Sir, I cannot lay hands on her, for she is my honest neighbour:" and turning him towards me, said, "Pray neighbour (Stirredge) if you have any thing to say, speak, that you may be gone." Then one of the justices in great rage and fury solemnly protested he would never sit with them any more, if they did not take me away; oftentimes wondering at their folly, for letting of me alone. Then he opened the back door, and went out, as though he would be gone, but in a little time came in again, saying, "What is she here yet? I wonder at your folly!" Then the power of the Lord fell upon me, and filled my heart with a very dreadful warning amongst them; telling them, "That it was in vain for them to be found striving against the Lord, and his people; their work would not pros-

per; for the great God of heaven and earth would be too strong for them. Therefore I warned them to repent, and amend their lives before it be too late; for the Lord will smite you in a day at unawares, and in an hour not expected by you; therefore remember that the Lord hath afforded you a day of warning, before destruction comes upon you." This, and much more ran through me at that time; and the Lord was pleased in a very short time to fulfil that testimony on them. For in a few weeks, as they were making merry at a feast, two of them died on a sudden, after dinner, and the rest very hardly escaped, about the year 1674.

Now, my dear children, I write not this, to rejoice at the fall of our enemies, but for you to consider of the goodness, and mercies, and dealing of the Lord with his people in all ages; and to keep in remembrance his loving kindness, and forbearance to the very wicked, that are always provoking him to pour down his vengeance upon their heads. Yet so

great is his mercies, that he always warneth the wicked, and giveth them time to repent, and space to amend their lives, that the Lord may be clear in the day of account; which day will surely come upon all that draw breath.

Therefore, my dear children, remember your latter end, and the day of account, and keep a bridle to your tongues; for he that knows not a bridle to his tongue, his religion is vain. And keep to the daily cross, which is the power of God to salvation. And if you will be heirs of the kingdom of heaven, and crown immortal, you must take up the daily cross, for "No cross, no crown;" for the cross will keep your minds in subjection to the living God: and being in subjection, and standing in awe that you sin not, this will keep you near unto the Lord, in a living acquaintance with him; then he will take delight to bless you more and more, to instruct you, and to counsel you in his way, which is pure and holy, and will not ad-

mit of any unholiness nor any uncleanness.

Therefore, my dear children, keep clear in your spirits in the sight of God, and beware of the world, and the people thereof; be not in too much familiarity with them, nor let in their spirit to mix with yours; that hath been the hurt of many that have been going right on their way, and have made a good beginning; yet, for want of watchfulness, and keeping to the guide of their youth, the light of Christ Jesus, which is the way to salvation; and whoever comes in any other way, is a thief and a robber. The way you know, you have been trained up in it; and the concern of my spirit is, that you may keep in it, and be concerned for your children, as your father and I have been for you; and train them up in the way of truth, and keep them out of the beggarly rudiments of this world, that they may grow up in plainness and keep to the plain language, both you and they; which is become a very indifferent thing amongst many of the pro-



fessors of truth. But in the beginning we went through great exercise for that very word as thee and thou to one particular person. And for my part, I had a concern upon my spirit, because I shifted many times from that one word; I would have said any word rather than thee or thou, that would have answered the matter that I was concerned in, but still I was condemned, guilt following of me, I was not clear in the sight of God, my way was hedged up with thorns, I could go no further, until I had yielded obedience unto the little things; then I walked alone (as my manner was, and frequently used so to do, when things came as a weight or concern upon me) where I might be private from all concern, except my soul's concern; oh! that desolate place where I used to retire alone, how many times hath my soul met with my beloved there, that hath sweetly comforted me, when my soul hath been sick of love; and full of doubts, for fear my beloved had left me, and forsaken me. But blessed be his



name that liveth forever, he still appeared in a needful time, when my soul was distressed for him, and then was the time I truly prized him. And this is the way of the Lord's dealing with his children, that he may teach them to be humble, and train them up as children, that they may learn obedience in all things to do his will. And this is his end in chastening of his children, to make them fit for his service.

But I little thought in that day, the Lord would have spared me so many years, to bear a faithful testimony to his blessed truth, and powerful appearance in the morning of the blessed day of the breaking forth of his glorious light and life unto many thousands that sat in darkness, whose state was miserable and distressed, and many times past hope of ever seeing a good day, and at their wits-end; horror, dread and anguish was in the hearts of many. Oh! these were they that would receive and prize the blessed profers of God's everlasting love and appearance, though it was in the way of his

judgments : for I can truly say, that my heart and soul delighted in judgment ; though one woe was poured out after another ; yet blessed be the day in which the everlasting truth was first sounded in my ears, which was in the nineteenth year of my age: oh, let it never be forgotten by me, is my soul's desire; but more blessed be the name of the Lord our God, and the right arm of his power, that hath been made bare from day to day, and from year to year, for the carrying on of his blessed work, and the preservation of his children unto this very day alive in his blessed testimony.

But the greatest exercise that ever I met withal, was concerning this separating spirit that is gone forth from us, that first began to appear in those parts, in John Story and John Wilkinson, about the year 1670, which I find a concern upon my spirit to leave a short relation of my great travail and exercises in this work and service for the Lord, his blessed truth and testimony, that he, in the riches of his love had made my heart and soul a

living partaker of: praises, be given to his holy name forever.

In the year 70, which was a time of great suffering amongst friends, and from that time forward, as it is well known amongst friends, and others, we went to our meetings at the peril of our lives, and our goods they took for a prey. And in this time of great exercise did this dividing spirit begin to appear, and in a very crafty manner did ensnare the hearts of divers of the simple. And indeed they were too many that the Lord had reached unto in the days of the breaking forth of his wonderful power, whom the Lord had enriched both inward and outward, that had forgotten the days of their distress, and where the Lord first found them out, and had caused the offence of the cross to cease, and had gotten into ease and liberty. Oh ! how did such fall in with them, to the grief of the souls of the faithful.

And in that day of great trouble, greater was our sorrow for the loss of our brethren, than for all our persecutions, or

loss of goods, or all other abuses of what kind soever ; for indeed, great was our sorrow on every hand, and my soul was mostly concerned for the Lord, and his blessed truth and testimony. Oh ! how did my heart pant after the Lord, and my soul travailed night and day before him, for strength to stand a faithful witness for the living God, whom I had made a covenant with in the days of my bitter bewailings, when my soul lay in distress and horror ; where the Lord first met with me when I was bewailing myself in bitter lamentation, saying in my heart, “ Oh, that I could find out a cave in the earth, wherein I might go and mourn out my days in sorrow, and see man no more ; or that the Lord would be pleased to accept of me upon any terms ; or if my life would be accepted for a ransom for my soul, I would be very willing to part with it.” The cry many a time ran through my heart. “ Oh Lord, what shall I do to be saved ?”

Oh ! the appearance of the Lord in that state was very precious to me, I very gladly entered into covenant with him,

to serve him forever, if he would redeem my soul from death, and from under the power of him that was too strong for me. And seeing the Lord in his infinite mercy was so good and gracious unto me, as to give me my hearts desire, how could I forget it? No, "rather let my right hand forget her cunning, and my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, before I should forget to pay the vows and promises to the Lord, in my days of my distress."

And now to come to the matter, concerning this libertine spirit.—In the aforesaid year, 1770, when they began their work, the priest's son of our town was one of the informers. and his curate was another. The priest's son bought him a new sword, and swore he would bathe it in our blood; and said, "it was no more sin to kill a Quaker, than it was to kill a louse." Thus they began their dreadful work, which is too tedious to run through the particulars: but they first nailed up our meeting house door, and set a guard before it; and it being on a day that the petty sessions was kept in that town of Kain-

sham, four miles from Bristol, there being several justices there, they sent the bailiff and other officers, attended with a great company of rabble, who came in great rage with clubs and other weapons, but the Lord was good and gracious unto us, and gave us strength according to the day, and opened my mouth in a testimony, for the encouragement of friends, and in praise to God, for counting us worthy to suffer for his name and truth's sake. And after me, another woman, to the encouraging of friends; and the power of the Lord was so livingly felt amongst us, that our enemies fell, that they could hardly speak to ask us our names. But at length we were fined twenty pounds a piece. But when meeting ended, we came away rejoicing. And indeed there was great cause for it; for the power of God was over all to our great comfort.

But for all this, the clouds gathered blackness, and storms raised higher and higher, and dismal days appeared; and many set their wits at work, and consulted together how to meet in private, and out of the enemies sight. And it was but



a little time that our meeting held together, for one that had been a great preacher of our meeting, was soon weary with standing in the street, at our meeting house door; and was greatly offended with us, for not leaving our meeting house, and come and meet with him in private in his dwelling house. And there was a little remnant that could not conform to the will of man, but feared the Lord, and dreaded to deny him before men.

Then R. W. who was John Story's great associate, whilst the said J. S. abode in our parts, sent a messenger to tell us, "that if we would come and meet with him, and some others in private, where (said they) we may sit together in quietness and stillness, and wait upon the Lord, and enjoy the benefit of our meeting; which will be better than standing here in the street, to be hurried and thronged together, and hardly any time of stillness to wait upon God." A very plausible bait the enemy had cast in their view, and indeed too many were taken



in the snare. But when I heard this message delivered from the wise preacher afore-named, oh! the concern that fell upon me, in consideration of them that had been preachers amongst us many years, who should have been a strength to the weak, and encouragers of the people; and legs to the lame, and eyes to the blind; that such men should have no more courage, nor zeal, nor love to the Lord and his blessed truth, oh! it became my great grief, and I sorrowed night and day: Lord, strengthen thy weak ones, and make the little ones as strong as David; give us courage and boldness to stand as faithful witnesses for thy blessed truth. And blessed for ever be the Lord our God, he answered my request, and according to the day was our strength renewed; blessed be that hand that never failed us, nor any that put their trust in him. So they parted from us, and left us as it were in the open field to encounter with our enemies; who the more triumphed, and made a bye-word of them and us, and cried out, "here are the fools,

the wise men are gone. Aye, said they, they have more wit than to meet so near the justice's house to aggravate him and ruin themselves; they are wise men to save themselves, and that they have; but these are the fools, they will ruin themselves do what we can : a poor company of ignorant fools that know not their right hand from their left; do you think to stand against all the powers of the earth? A company of silly fools !”

Thus they pleased themselves with such discourses. Thus to lose ground, was a grievous exercise to us, to hear any of our brethern, which should have been as valiants in Israel, and have gone before the little ones, like valiant champions, to have borne the brunt of the battle, that our enemies might have seen their courage and valour for the Lord of hosts; that the Lord, through his instruments, might have been glorified, and his blessed name and truth honoured and exalted over all; who alone is worthy of all honour and praise for evermore.

But if any should say, “was this a discouragement to you little ones?” No, our fear and zeal towards God was increased; and I can say, to the praise and honour of his everlasting name, my cries and supplications did ascend night and day unto the Lord, for strength to stand in my lot and testimony, and that I might be made able to hold out to the end.— And for ever blessed be the Lord, he strengthened my weakness, and made the weak as strong as David, and afforded his living presence amongst us, to our great comfort. But still my exercise increased, which drove me to a narrow search, and a deep and ponderous consideration, what should be the cause of my great exercise, crying to the Lord, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Wilt thou be pleased to make known thy will concerning me? Is there any thing lodgeth in my heart that offendeth thee? Oh, purge it out I beseech thee, search my heart, and try my reins, for I love to be searched and tried. Lord, wilt thou be better pleased with us, to

go and meet with our friends that are gone from us, is there service there that we know not of; or am I too forward, or over-zealous for thy truth." To this inquiry, the answer so suited my inquiring heart: "keep your meeting-time and place; be valiant for my truth upon earth, and I will crown you with honour." Oh! blessed be his eternal name; no greater honour does my soul desire, than to be preserved in his fear.

And another time in great exercise, it often sounded in my heart, "I will gather from far, from the East, West, North and South, and they shall come and sit down in the kingdom, with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and the children of the kingdom shall be cast out." Oh, the concern that fell upon me, and my cry to the Lord was, "Save the children of the kingdom; oh! gather from far, and bring near them that are afar off; but save the children of the kingdom." This thing was my daily and hourly exercise; many times saying within myself, "O Lord, save the children of the

kingdom, or take me to thyself, whilst thy mercy is continued unto me; let me not live to be cast out of thy kingdom."

Thus the Lord gently led me in these things, tending towards this service and testimony that he was pleased to lay upon me to bear; which was the very greatest that ever I met withal: for still my exercise increased, my inward pains grew stronger and stronger, my heart was troubled within me, my eyes were as a fountain of tears, and I cried out, "Woe is me, that ever I was born. Oh! what is the matter that all my bowels seem to be displaced." Then the word ran through my heart, "My indignation is kindled, and my anger is waxen hot against this people, and my controversy shall be with them; and the time is coming, that they will bring more dishonour to my name and truth, than is brought by open prophaneness, and thou shalt be an instrument to proclaim it in their ears." Which made me to tremble before the Lord, crying, "Oh Lord! why wilt thou require such hard

things of me? Lord, look upon my afflictions, and lay no more upon me than I am able to bear. They will not hear me, that am a contemptible instrument. And seeing they despise the service of women so much, O Lord, make use of them that are more worthy." And I oftentimes cried to the Lord to remove it from me, still crying out of my unworthiness, "Oh! how unfit am I for such service!" The answer I received was, "They shall be made worthy, that dwell low in my fear."——So we continued under our great suffering, a poor little remnant, as one may term it, was in the open field, to encounter with our enemies. But for ever magnified be the name and power of our God, his presence was our life and strength, and according to the day, was strength given. Wherefore we had great cause to say, "Good is the Lord, and his mercies endure forever." And we had cause to praise his name, for that he had made us worthy to suffer for his name and truth's sake; and keeping of us faithful



to stand for our God, and confess him before men. For I can say to his praise, I was so encouraged in all times of persecution, wherein I might bear my testimony for the Lord, that had redeemed my soul from death, and raised me out of the pit of misery, that I rejoiced to do the will of the Lord, for it was more to me, than all that ever my eyes beheld, and to stand a faithful witness for him.

I was constrained in the fear and dread of the Lord, to warn them of the dreadful day of the Lord, and to call them to repentance for their unfaithfulness, thus we went on in our continual exercise, and in the strength of the Lord, and by the assistance of his holy power, were borne up in it.

But now to come to what is most before me, that all may understand how the enemy works in a mystery, and under a fair pretence to betray the precious life, and from the simplicity of the gospel, which is foolishness to the wisdom of the world.



In this troublesome time, it came in my heart to visit friends in Wiltshire, where I had heard much of J. S. his goings on. He had much reflected upon several women, for bearing their testimony against that spirit; and I met with two good women that had been upon the service of truth, and had a good testimony. He grieved them, bidding them go home about their business, and wash their dishes, and not go about to preach; and said, that Paul did absolutely forbid women to preach; and sent them crying home. And furthermore, he counselled friends to use Christian prudence, and remember what is said in scripture, "If you are persecuted in one city, flee to another." So he would have them to alter the day and time of their usual meeting. And there was a little meeting in a dwelling house, and he importuned them to remove it, or alter the time; and the woman friend of the house was soon gained, not being so zealous for the truth as she should have been. Her husband, being more faithful, would not be caught

in that snare ; she fell at difference with him, and said, “ Dost thou think God doth not reveal his secrets to such as J. S. more than we ? yes surely ; and if the Lord is pleased to save us, and what we have, and make him an instrument, why shall not we receive his counsel.” A very subtle bait, to catch the poor ignorant people in. Oh this was a great grief to the sincere hearted, it caused many to know days and nights of sorrow. But still this testimony always lived in my heart, that God’s anger was kindled against that spirit whose followers have turned their backs on truth’s testimony ; and was not only fallen into that snare themselves, but endeavoured to ensnare many more. The concern of it began to come over me, insomuch that I dreaded to go to a meeting, for fear that testimony would be required of me ; but the time was not yet come.

But there came a faithful servant of the Lord to our meeting, whose name was Miles Halhead, who was wonderfully endowed with the power of the

Lord, and great discerning ; he came to see me, and said, “ My love runs unto thee, and that for the works sake that is in thee ; for God will require hard things of thee, thou little thinkest what is at work in thy heart ; the Lord God of my life keep thee faithful, my prayers shall be for thee, as often as I have thee in remembrance ; thou art as my own life, and sealed in my bosom, I cannot forget thee, so dear child fare thee well ; the Lord my God hath sent me forth once more, and when I return home, he will cut the thread of my life in two.” And so it was. But, oh, the goodness of the Lord with that salutation overflowed my whole heart, and melted my bowels into tenderness, and my eyes as a fountain of tears, saying within myself, “ What am I but a poor helpless creature, and am not worthy of the least of these great favours and mercies that the dear servant of the Lord is speaking of : and surely if the Lord be with me, why is it thus with me ? I am under great exercises daily, and straits many.”

Sometimes it seemed to me, as if the Lord had withdrawn himself from me, which caused great sorrow of heart. But in a little time after, our lots being cast at Bristol, where John Story was most of his time, the heighth of persecution being a little over, then he could preach one hour after another, whilst one word would hang to another, to the hindrance of several travailing souls, that have been in travail, and pained at the very heart for a little time to ease their spirits, and discharge their duty, that all might have been comforted together. But in the room of that, a cloud of darkness hath come over, which hath made many to groan under it. But, oh; the dreadful agony which I have been in, to come forth with that testimony that had lived with me, that I had been so long confirmed in. Many nights and days, and weeks and months have I gone on in sorrow and pain, and have eaten no pleasant bread. And many times have I lain down in sorrow, and watered my pillow with my tears, crying out, "O Lord,

what will become of me, and what shall I do?" And the Lord said, "A testimony I do require of thee." Then I said, "O Lord, if thou wilt open my heart to declare of thy goodness, and what thou hast done for thy people, and to tell of thy noble acts, and thy manifold mercies, how ready should I be to do it; but these are hard things, who can bear them."

Thus I did reason with the Lord, till my burthen became too heavy for me to bear. And when I have gone forth in my lawful concerns, and have seen any of them, pain did take hold of me, and distress of mind, and anguish of spirit did seize upon me, insomuch that I sought out private places to mourn in, saying, "What shall I do? send me to a nation of a strange language, whose face I never knew, and make use of a better instrument for this great work; they will not hear me, who am a contemptible instrument, neither do I know whether any of them will receive my testimony."

For there was not one that knew for what I went through such great exercises; for many friends have said, that I had something that lay weightily upon me; insomuch that I could hardly go on my feet, and they wondered that I did not give up unto it, and said, that I hurt myself, and the meeting too.

Oh, I cannot but greatly admire the infinite mercies and loving-kindness of the Lord, and his long forbearance with me, in that he did not cut me off in my disobedience to him, when I knew what he required of me, as well as I knew my right hand from my left, and would not obey him. But still I reasoned and cried out, "What shall I do!" And I thought that if any one had borne a testimony in public before me, I could the better have borne it; but I to be one of the first, such a contemptible one as I, I thought I could not do it. But what mercy did not do, judgment did; for the Lord was pleased to lay his hand heavy upon me, and with his correcting rod chastized me; and I did feel more of



the displeasure of the Lord for my backwardness to his requirings, than ever I did for my former transgression. For I may say, as true as ever Jonah was plunged into the deep, and his head wrapped about with weeds, so was my soul plunged into a gulph of misery; insomuch that all hope of ever finding favour with God again, was hid from me, and I left in sorrow to lament, as one without hope.

Oh! how did my heart lament, and my soul languish night and day; and I said, “ Oh, that the Lord would be pleased to shew mercy once more, and to raise up my life again, and redeem my soul out of this horrible pit wherein I am held as with chains, and bring me to my former state again, and require what thou pleasest, and I will obey thy voice, though I should be hated of all men upon the face of the earth.”

And before I could take any rest, I made a deep engagement unto the Lord, to do whatsoever he required of me, if he would give me strength, and be with



me. So when first day morning came, I had a great concern upon me; and when I sat down to wait upon the Lord the power of the Lord seized on me, which made me to tremble; insomuch that my bones were shaken, and my teeth chattered, and I was in a great agony; and standing up, with a dreadful testimony, and proclaiming God's controversy with the exalted and high amongst the professors of truth, and such as had departed from the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, with such God's anger was waxen hot, and his indignation burned, and I warned them to repent while they had a day, and more to that effect; but as short as I could. Then a friend stood up with a great concern upon him, saying, "A living testimony is the God of heaven and earth raising up amongst the poor and contemptible ones, that shall stand over your heads for evermore." So he went on in great power and authority, and the power of the Lord was greatly manifested among us that day. O glory be to his everlasting name for evermore, saith my soul, for his blessed

appearance to us that day, and all other of his mercies at all times, who returned me an hundred fold into my bosom, after all my unworthy consulting against the motions of the spirit of so merciful and compassionate a father, who after he had corrected me received me into favour again. Oh, glory to him for evermore : for when I had cleared my conscience ; oh, the peace and comfort and consolation that I received from the Lord, was more to me than all the world, or the friendship of it.

So some time after, John Story, and three of his party came to my house to rebuke me, and were very high, and spoke great swelling words, thinking thereby to discourage me. John Story asked me, what I had to lay to his charge, and what I had against him ? I told him, what I had against him, I never received from man, nor by any information from any one ; but what I have against thee, is from the evidence of God in my own conscience. The evidence of God in thy conscience, said he in a deriding manner that

is not sufficient for thee. I said, it was sufficient for me ; by what else should I try spirits with, but by the evidence of God in my own conscience. So he said again, that was not sufficient for me. My husband said, "John, to what wilt thou bring us now ? Hast not thou, and all other friends, directed us to God's witness in our own conscience, and now thou sayest it is not sufficient." And he said again, "It is not sufficient, unless thou couldst bring witness that I had done some evil action, and what could I accuse him of ; or else what signifies it to have ought against him."

I could have laid enough to his charge of his manner of going on in time of persecution ; but being willing to be short with him, I said, I have this to say to thee, that thy ways and manner in public meetings, is much differing from the apostle, who said, if any thing be revealed to him that sitteth by, the first is to be silent. And thou wilt take up the whole time of the meeting, although there hath been many that have been concerned be-

fore thy face, and that greatly ; so what thou doest, is not ignorantly, but wilfully. He answered me very angrily, and said, " If I do do so, what canst thou make of that ?" I did say, " Thou art out of the order of the gospel ; for it is said,<sup>2</sup> the church may exercise one by one ; and thou dost not as thou wouldest be done by. And further I told him, " That this was not his place to abide here a preaching, and burthening the souls of the innocent ; but thy place is to return home into the north, and be reconciled to thy brethren, before thou go to offer thy gift." So many great swelling words proceeded from him, and his ~~the~~ friends which were with him ; and they went away sorely displeased.

And their rage increased towards me, and many faithful friends. (Many were concerned that had sitten under their dead ministry ; ) but mostly against me, for discharging my duty, in obedience to what the Lord required of me, and committed to my charge, concerning that spirit which did for some time en-

deavour to lord it over God's heritage ; which made many sensible ones go bowed down many a time ; my soul is a living witness, with many more of what I have here declared ; which is but little of their persecution towards me, in consideration of what follows after, for the Lord was pleased to continue my exercise in that city, where John Story abode much of his time. And several more of that spirit oftentimes frequented thither in that time of exercise with that spirit. And the Lord was pleased to make me so sensible of them, that in the night season, I had many a sore and hard travail upon my spirit, when I knew not of any of them by any information from any one. Then did I make my moan unto the Lord, crying in secret, " Oh, what shall I do to go through such hard things ? Oh, that I may be excused this day, or that thou wilt be pleased to keep me in silence this day ; then should I be very willing to go to meeting to wait upon thee, and to sit under the shadow of thy wing with great delight,

where thy fruit will be pleasant to my taste." Then it would come up before me, the covenant that I made with the Lord in the days of my distress, when all the world, and the friendship of it, would not yield one drop of comfort to my poor distressed soul. Then did I promise the Lord in that day, which was twenty years before that, that if he would redeem my soul from death, and give me assurance of life, I would serve him all my days, if he would give me strength, and be with me; for I mattered not what I went through for his names' sake. And it would often come up before me, that they that followed the Lord, and loved him most, did whatsoever he commanded them. Oh! I cannot but admire the long forbearance, and loving-kindness of the Lord, that he had not cut me off in my gain-saying, and unfaithfulness; for I never wanted the assistance of his holy spirit, in giving up to his requirings, blessed be the holy name of our Lord God, and the right arm of his strength for evermore; who



alone hath been our keeper and preserver to this very day; glory be to his great name for evermore.

Now I shall give a little account of one meeting in Bristol, which was one of the greatest exercises that ever I met with, or ever went through since I had a remembrance. When I was going to the meeting, I had a great exercise upon my spirit, and knew not for what; but after some time of waiting upon the Lord, I saw my service, for J. Story was there, who came into Bristol the night before, and several friends had “warned him not to come and offer his gift, till he was reconciled unto his brethren;” for if he did, they did believe that the Lord would concern one or another to bear testimony openly against him. But I knew not of it till afterward, for if I had, I believe my service would not have been so hard and strange unto me. But whilst he was a declaring, a great cloud came over the meeting, and I was greatly exercised in my spirit; insomuch that the Lord constrained me to cry, “Woe to that



spirit that dimneth the glory of the Lord, and woe to that pot that the scum remains in it, for in it is the broth of abominable things, such as the Lord's soul loatheth, and the souls of his people also." Oh, how it ran through me again and again, and I was pressed in my spirit to declare it, whilst he was a speaking; but I was sensible what a disturbance it would be in the meeting: I would fain have forborne till he had done, but I durst not; for I was afraid to speak, and afraid to keep silent. For if I had been silent, I knew that I should have withstood the spirit of the Lord in my own conscience. But I strove against it by reasoning, and saying, "Oh, that the Lord would be pleased to excuse me this day, and that I might not lose his favour, then I should have accounted myself happy." But all this reasoning, would not do the service that God had for me to do that day. But when I found no way to pass it by, I stood up to clear my conscience, and discharge my duty in the sight of God. And when I con-

sidered the low estate and weak condition that I had been in that day ; O the Lord's strength sustained me, for according to the day was strength given me, glory to his everlasting name for evermore, saith my soul, for his blessed reward was returned into my bosom, and he renewed my strength, and raised up my life in dominion over all the opposition I then met with.

And thus, reader, I have given this short account of the going forth and work of that spirit ; since which, I have seen a withering and decay come upon it, near twenty years having since passed over my head.

Oh, the many unchristian-like treatments that have been brought forth by that spirit ; and how have some of them writ and printed against truth, and its good order, and how have they turned their backs in the day of battle, and have left their brethren in the hands of their enemies. O how grievous have their actions been since the year 70. Now let all consider whether that testimony

that God raised in my heart in that time of my great distress, and great bowings down, and bitter bewailings, when the Lord answered me for what my great exercise came upon me was not true; for I can truly say, I went under the exercise of their backsliding many times. And the Lord was pleased to exercise me, and to cause me to go through a vale of tears, and a land of drought, in order to humble me, and that I might bow to his will, and obey him in all things, "For obedience is better than sacrifice, and to hearken to the voice of the Lord, is better than the fat of rams." And there is no hearing of his gracious voice, but by humbling under his mighty power, and subjecting the mind unto his will; then doth he make known his mind and will, and then blessed are they that hear his word, and obey it; and blessed are they that know his will, and do it; O blessed be his eternal name for ever, and for evermore, saith my soul, for all his mercies, and favours, and blessings, and good gifts, and tokens of

his gracious love that he hath bestowed upon me ever since I have had a remembrance. First, in keeping me out of the evil of the world in my young and tender years, and preserving me from falling into many, and various and great temptations, of which I had a great share in the days of my tender years, and then for taking me by the hand, and leading me in his way, and also opened my spiritual eye, that I might see the way which led towards his glorious kingdom; and for his preserving of me to this very day alive in his blessed and glorious testimony; and all these his manifold mercies, which are all in my view at this time. And in the remembrance of them my heart is truly bowed, and with hearty thanksgiving, do return unto my heavenly father all glory, and honour, and praise, and everlasting renown be given unto my God, and our dear Lord and Saviour Christ Jesus, who is sitting upon his throne, judging in righteousness, and swaying his sceptre in holiness; who is worthy for ever to be feared, honoured,

and obeyed, saith my soul, at this time, and for evermore, Amen.

And now my dear children, it further lives in my heart, to leave some of the testimonies that the Lord was pleased to lay upon me in that time of great suffering in Bristol, and near unto it.

In the year 1680, I was greatly concerned to go to the Mayor at Bristol, with this testimony on their session's day in the morning, waiting at his door for his rising from his bed, I met with him going through one of his rooms, before he was fully ready, and said unto him, "The God of heaven and earth hath constrained me this night and morning to come unto thee with this testimony ; therefore dont lay it by thee, as a thing not worth thy minding ; but read it, and well weigh and consider what is written therein ; for could I have been clear in the sight of God in not coming, I had not been here this day."

*Which testimony was as followeth.*

“THIS is to the Mayor, Aldermen and officers of all sorts, and all that have a hand in persecuting of the righteous saints and servants of the Most High God, called Quakers, who are near and dear unto the Lord, as the apple of his eye, and the Lord hath said in the scriptures of truth, ‘Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.’ Now consider you people of all sorts, who have the scriptures of truth so frequently amongst you : O ! do you make such ill use of them, as not to take notice what is written therein ; surely they were given forth for a better purpose ; for the Lord our God, who is full of compassion, and bowels of love towards the work of his own hands, hath in the riches of his love provided a way wherein people might escape his wrath and fierce vengeance ; I say the Lord hath placed a measure of his good spirit in your hearts, that never consented to sin ; the which, if you give up to be guided by it, it would make you



happy forever ; it would teach you to do unto all men, as you would all men should do unto you ; this is a good lesson for you to learn, this would make you honourable in the sight of the nations, and beautify you in the sight of the people ; then no rending, tearing, nor devouring, neither making havock, nor spoiling of our goods, no imprisoning of the servants of the most high God, for the answer of a good conscience ; no beating and throwing of the ancient and feeble, because they cannot so hastily go out of the way, as your hasty wills would have them : O ! the God of heaven will plead for these things, and a day of reckoning will the great, terrible and mighty Jehovah, who is the God of the whole earth, call for. And dreadful and terrible will he be in his pleading. Oh ! who will be able to stand before him, who is like a devouring fire ; and all the wicked, and all that forget God, shall be as stubble before him saith the scriptures of truth.

“Now, O ye rulers, and people of all sorts, read the scriptures, and see what



became of the persecutors in days past, for they were written and left upon record for the comfort of them that live the life of them, and for warning of the wicked, and ungodly. Now consider Dives in the days of his health, how he fared sumptuously every day, and considered not poor Lazarus, that begged at his gate. Oh! how hard-hearted was he? But what became of him? And what a dreadful place of torment is prepared for the wicked and for the ungodly, wherein they are made to cry out, when it is too late, for one drop of water to cool their tongues, and it shall not be granted them. Therefore for the Lord's sake, and for your own soul's sake, repent, lest you perish to all eternity. Wherefore the call of the Lord is once more sounded in thee, O city of Bristol, and to the inhabitants thereof. Oh, repent, repent before it be too late, and break of thy sins by true repentance, and thy transgression by shewing mercy: plead the cause of the innocent, and let the oppressed go free, and be not worse than them of old, who cried, "Help, O men

of Israel, &c.” But there is a company of rude boys, and rabble of the basest sort with the officers, thronging in amongst us, pressing of us together without mercy; and the officers themselves taking of us by the arms, and throwing us along, until we can hardly recover ourselves; and pulling off the men’s hats, and throwing them from them in great fury, and hale to prison many in a day. Oh, be ye ashamed, ye rulers, and all that have a hand in this work; oh! dread and tremble before the great and terrible God that made you, and gave you breath, and being: for he is able to dash you in pieces like a potter’s vessel, and to take away your breath, and to lay you as dead men before him. Therefore consider it before it be too late, and before the days of your calamity come upon you, and the arrows of the Almighty stick fast in your livers, and there will be none to help you, nor to deliver out of his hands; for the Lord will assuredly visit this nation, and that for the treachery, and cursed oaths, pride, and oppression of many therein, whose

sins have reached unto heaven. And it is the determination of the great God of heaven and earth to send his destroying angel amongst them, and shall thin them; great will be your sorrow, pain, and perplexity, terror and amazement, horror and vexation of spirit. Alas! for the day will be great, who shall be able to stand in it, but the pure in heart, and them that have made the Lord Jehovah their choice, and love him above all things, as well in times of peace, as in times of distress, such shall dwell with the Lord forever.

“ And now, O you magistrates consider what you are a doing; and you that are fathers of children, O dishonour not your grey hairs so much, as that you should be found nourishing of such ungodly actions. Oh! consider your places, and wherefore the Lord created you, it was to serve him, and not to serve sin, nor uncleanness. And wherefore did the Lord our God, who is rich in his mercies, ordain means, or a way whereby men might escape the snare, but that he

would have all to do well, and live in his favour for ever. Oh! be you all awakened this day, and be you roused up, and sleep not in security, for destruction is near if you do not speedily repent. Oh, consider the Sodomites of old, how they were toiling, and nothing would satisfy them, but the servants of the most high God, that he had sent to warn them; and instead of being warned by them, they the more provoked the just and holy God, who willeth not the death of sinners, but had rather they would return and live; and therefore hath he sent his servants early and late to warn the people; that by taking warning they might escape the wrath of the most high God, that all are liable to fall into, who are adding sin unto sin. And truly I know nothing more likely to draw down the vengeance of the dreadful and terrible God, than to cruelly use his children, and to make them to groan under their oppression, as Pharoah did in his day, until their groans pierced the ears of the Lord, and he said, "I have heard the

groanings of my people, and I am come down to deliver them.” And truly our God is the same as great in power, and as mighty to deliver at this day, as he was in that day. And truly if you do thus go on, as you have already done, your days will be shortened, and you shall not prosper. Therefore consider it in time, I intreat you, as you tender the good of your own souls, and your childrens, be not patterns of cruelty to succeeding generations: leave not your names upon record for such ungodly actions, and unchristian-like dealings, as persecuting your honest neighbours for keeping their consciences void of offence towards God, and all men; for it is because we fear the great God of heaven and earth that made us, and gave us our breath and being, and durst not betray our Lord and master, as Judas did in his day; but mark what became of him. I say, because we durst not deny the Lord, nor wrong our own souls, therefore are we sufferers this day under your cruelty. And as I have already said, that the just

and righteous God of heaven and earth, who will one day plead with all people, and not one shall escape from his tribunal seat, without a just recompence of reward for their deeds done in their life time. I say again, he is no respecter of persons, he regardeth not the rich more than the poor, he is just in all his judgments, and equal in his ways, ever blessed and honoured be his worthy name and his honourable truth, saith my soul, forever, and for evermore, Amen."

These things have been weighty upon my spirit, and for the clearing of my conscience have I wrote them, desiring your moderation may appear, and that noble spirit may arise in you, that was in them of old, who, "Tried all things, and held fast that which was good." However it be, whether you will hear or forbear, clear shall I be in the sight of my God, who said to his servant in the days of old, "If thou warn the wicked, and they turn not from their wickedness, yet



thou hast delivered thy soul, but his blood shall be upon his own head.”

*Elizabeth Stirredge.*

And it further liveth with me to leave a relation of our suffering, trials, and imprisonment in the year 1683.

That if it may fall to any of your lots to suffer for truth's testimony, or for the answer of a good conscience in any case whatever; I mean in things relating to the answer of a good conscience towards God, which you may be assured to meet withal during the time of your pilgrimage here. Well I have this to say, and this testimony to bear for the living God, and his everlasting mercies, that amongst the many blessings and favours and deliverances that we are made partakers of from year to year, for these seven and thirty years; which, blessed be the name and power of our God, he hath made me a living witness, and an enjoyer of his blessed truth: and amongst all the blessed seasons of his love, this was the great-



est of mercies unto me, for the God of heaven and earth was with us at our down-lying and up-rising; and whilst we slept he kept us, and when we awaked he was present with us, the right hand of his power upheld us, and his good spirit sustained us, and made hard things easy unto us, and bitter things sweet. When we awaked in the night season, spiritual groans ascended unto him; and in the morning light, living thanksgiving and high praises was returned unto him that liveth for evermore; who was the God and Father of all our mercies and blessings, and gave us strength, courage and boldness to stand faithful unto our testimony, to the praise of the Lord. The terror of evil times did not affright us, though our enemies determined our ruin and destruction, and pleased themselves in afflicting of us.

*The way and manner of our going to prison, and by whom we were persecuted.*

ONE Robert Cross, priest of the parish of Chew-magna, in the county of Somerset (whither we removed some time before, and where we then dwelt,) who was a great persecutor twenty years before; but had left it for some years, until he began afresh with us, his rage being again renewed against friends, for their faithfulness to the Lord, and his blessed truth. He was greatly offended; but against me in particular was he enraged greatly, to that degree, that he said, "If he could but live to see me ruined, and my husband for my sake, he cared not if he died next day." And that which enraged him against me was, I being with a neighbour that lay very weak, and on her death-bed, there being several of the said priest's congregation, I had a testimony amongst them, declaring a day of mortality to them, which accordingly fell out to three or four

in two weeks time, which was taken notice of; and the priest being told of it, was enraged as aforesaid, and contrived and made use of several instruments for the carrying on of his cruel work. He sent to the neighbouring justice, and threatened him, that it should cost him an hundred pounds, if he did not put the king's laws in execution against the Quakers, as the justice told me himself, upon a time when they took me from a burial, and had me before them; the manner of which comes up before me at this time.

It being my lot to be at the burial of a daughter of one professing truth, where I had a testimony to the people, many being there of the priest's company, which greatly offended him. The next week after, the father of this young woman dying also, the day of his burial happening on the very day that several justices were met at their petty sessions, near the burying place of friends; they sent a warrant, with some officers, into our burying-yard, to bring away preacher

and hearers, if any one there was that did take upon them to preach, there being a great concourse of people, many coming in with the officers, to see what they would do unto us; and a very great company with the corpse. And no sooner were we come into the yard, but the power of the Lord seized upon me, and made me to tremble, that I could hardly stand on my feet; but taking hold on a friend that was near me, I said, "There is a day coming, in which the God of heaven and earth will be too strong for the stout hearted amongst you: therefore repent, and amend your lives, while you have a day, and a time; for as the tree falls, so it lieth, and as death leaves, judgment finds, for there is no repentance in the grave. Therefore hasten, hasten to repentance, and amendment of life; for the great God of heaven and earth will thin this nation, for the people are too many that are sinning against the Lord." This, and much more ran through me, for my heart was opened, and my spirit greatly enlarged by the

mighty power of the Lord, and drawn forth in bowels of love towards the people; for I saw the tears running down many faces, and many said, they would never be again as they had been. And the officer standing by me with a warrant in his pocket, he exceedingly trembled, and could hardly open the warrant without rending it, crying, "Oh! that I had been twenty miles from my habitation, that I had, not had a hand in this work this day; pray do not you take it ill of me, for I am forced to it; you must go with me before the justices, but I wish I had been farther off, then I had, had no hand in troubling of you, pray do not you be angry with me." I said, "Do not be troubled so much, I am not offended, I will go with thee."

So when we came before them, (the justices) one of them was greatly enraged against me; he said, "You are an old prophetess, I know you of old;" (he might well say so, for he was one of them that I bore a dreadful testimony amongst ten years before.) He greatly

threatened me, and said, " I should go to prison, and he would ruin my husband ; but where is he ? he careth little for you, I will warrant you, else he would have come with you, and not have suffered you to be sent to prison by yourself. You are a troublesome woman, Parson Cross complains of you ; you scatter his flock, and have done him more injury than all the Quakers ever did ; you made an oration at the daughter's grave the last week, and now at the father's also : you shall certainly go to prison, that shall be the least I will do unto you." Thus he went on in an outrageous manner, and I stood before him, looking stedfastly upon him, and did not answer one word in this time ; but he continued, and said, " You are a subtle woman ; your tongue is at liberty when you are with your conventicle ; but you are dumb, now you are come before us, I will send you to prison." I said, " I am not so much affrighted at a prison, as thou thinkest I am ; but if thou send me to prison, and shorten my days, because



of my weakness, thou wilt but bring innocent blood upon thy head, and that will cry aloud for vengeance."

He said unto me, "Why do you break the king's laws then? And why do not you go to church? You are running headlong into Popery." "I deny the Pope," said I, and his actions." "Do you love the king," said he? Yes, said I, "Why do you not obey his law then?" said he, I have broken no law this day; said I, I was at a burial, and it is no breach of law to bury our dead." Well, said he, you say you have broken no law, will you keep the king's law for the time to come, and leave off holding conventicles and preaching?" "So far as the king's laws do not wrong my conscience (said I) I will keep them, but I will not wrong my conscience for the king, nor no man else; and I do not know whether ever the Lord may open my mouth again; but if he do, and unloose my tongue to speak, I shall not keep silent." "So, you can talk now, when you please; but (said he to them that sat by him) she will



be dumb again by and by." I will ask her one question that shall make her dumb again. "Well, you say you have not broken the king's laws, you were but at a burial, but I will warrant you held a conventicle amongst the people at John Hall's house, before you brought him forth; what say you to that?" I did not presently answer him, until he said again, "Why dont you answer, I knew she would be dumb." Then I answered, "I am no informer, Judas was an informer, when he betrayed his master." Then he looked on them that were by him, and said, "I tell you these Quakers are the subtlest people that ever we have to do withal, there is no dealing with them; one while they will not speak at all, and another while such cross answers as this; I protest I will send her to prison." Then he called the clerk to make my mittimus, and the officer was called for; then he raged at him, and said, "You silly fellow, you have let all the men go, and have brought a troublesome woman here to trouble us; you should have

brought two or three rich men to have paid for all the conventicle." Sir, I did not know them, said he. "No, I will make you swear you do not know them; give him the book; make him kiss the book." The poor man was so scared at it, that he cried, "Pray Sir, dont you do it, I cannot swear." Then I looked on the justices, and said, "My soul is grieved to see how you oppress men's spirits, in forcing of them to wrong their consciences; do you not think that the just and righteous God will visit for these things? Yes verily, a day of reckoning will the great God of heaven and earth call for, and dreadful and terrible will it be to all the workers of iniquity." Then the other justice that sat by, and had forborne meddling all this time, being a moderate man, who was not forward in persecuting his neighbours; seeing the other so furious, said, "Come, let us come to the matter in hand: this woman was at a burial, and there are many religions in the world, and all have their way to bury their dead, and we cannot

hinder them: but come, officer, let us know the truth of the matter, was this a conventicle, or no? If it was, there must be a place prepared for her to stand up over the people to preach; was it so? No, Sir, said the officer. What then stood she on? nothing but the earth of the grave. And what said she? I never heard the like in all my life, said he, she said there was a day a coming, in which the God of heaven and earth would be too strong for the stout-hearted amongst us; and proclaimed a day of mortality amongst us, and warned us to repent and amend our lives; surely it made my heart to tremble." How? What a woman make your heart to tremble? "Yes, Sir, and I had no power to touch her, until she had said all she had in her heart to say." How, said the angry justice, "You silly fellow, you an officer, and had a severe warrant in your pocket, to bring away preacher and hearers, and you let her say all she had to say; you are not fit to be the king's officer; send him away to prison."——

Then he that was the moderate justice, went forth out of the room, and sent one to me, to desire me to go forth, I not being forward to go, for that honest confession of the poor man, did me more good, as I thought, than my release at that time. The justice returning in again, said, "Pray neighbour Stirredge go home about your business." So I returned to my habitation again, and had the peace of the Lord in my bosom; everlasting praises be given to the Lord our God forever.

But this wicked priest after this burial, went from house to house, and threatened the people, that it should cost them five pounds a piece for going to hear the Quakers. And some again being affrighted at his threatening, asked him forgiveness: others said they would go again. But still he continued his rage, for nothing would content him but our ruin. For after he had sent the officers to our meeting, who dealt roughly with us, by pulling and throwing, and threatening; all which did not content him.

But a little time after, as he was preaching in his pulpit, he fell down as dead, whilst the words were in his mouth; as many of the hearers being then and there present, declared unto me; that they thought he would never have drawn breath again. But after a great a-do, and all means used, that they could make use of, he a little recovered again. But said the people, we hope it will be a warning to him for to leave off persecuting his neighbours. But it was not, for he was heard to say, "That if he could but live to accomplish that work that he begun, he did not care if he died presently." So he seeing his neighbours not forward in answering his will to the full, he sends to Bristol for John Hellier, with more of his confederates, who was the great persecutor at Bristol, whom he thought did his work to the full; for they came in with many officers, into our meeting at Chew-magna, five miles from Bristol, where we were solemnly met together to wait upon the great God of heaven and earth; they rushed in amongst us, and arrested

us all in the king's name, and left a guard upon us, and went to the priest's house to dinner, and staid near two hours : in which time, we had our solemn meeting peaceably wherein we enjoyed the presence of the Lord, to our souls comfort, who never failed his children in a needful hour, but always gave them strength suitable to the day, everlasting honour be given to his holy name forever.

So after they had fed to the full, and drank in abundance, they brought with them faggots of wood from the priest's, with a hatchet and a great axe, and commanded the people to aid and assist them. So they mustered up their force as they came along : and the people seeing what posture they were in, cried out, "What are you a going to do?" "Blow up the house, and burn the Quakers, said they." Then down they threw their wood at the meeting-house door, and cried out, "Set fire on them, blow up the house. (Then the people cried out.) It will burn our houses that are near, and you wont be so wicked to burn the people, will you?"



Then they came in, in a violent manner, and laid hands on the children, threatening them to burn them; bringing some of them out they said, "We will make them a warning to all others, and make them repent that ever they were Quakers bastards."

Then they laid hands on us, hauling and dragging us along, beating some with a cane, and hewing off the legs of the forms, and taking other forms by the two ends, and so threw the friends backwards that sat thereon; often calling to our neighbours to aid and assist them. Some of them replied, "We cannot work on the sabbath day." So they continued the work until they had wearied themselves; then bringing us all out into the street amongst many people, I said unto them, "Where is your teacher?" What is that to you, some replied, you shall be sure to suffer, if the rest do not. "But where is your teacher?" I said again, "Let him come and see the fruit of his labour; this is his flock, and this is your sabbath days work, let him come and be-



hold the fruits of his labour, and see if he will not be ashamed of it." Then they forced us in again, and John Helliard caused his man to make our mittimus, and himself committed us to Ivelchester goal, where we were so cruelly used, as is after related.

John Helliard being the head man in this work, our head-borough asked him, what he should do with us? He replied, "Have them away to prison presently." The day being far spent, and the journey long, it being twenty and two miles to the county goal, he asked John Helliard how we should go? For here are many women that cannot travel on foot. He answered, "I will press some carts to haul them along." I said, "We are not ashamed to be carted for the testimony of our Lord and master Jesus Christ." "But you shall be carted, (said J. H.) as the whores are in Bristol."

So they returned to their master the priest, and told him they had done his work effectually, for we were all committed to prison. He put off his hat, and

thanked them, and said, "It would add years to his life, now he should live in peace." But take notice how short his days were. The head-borough on the morrow morning went and told him, he must provide horses to carry the Quakers to prison on. He answered, "The devil should have us first." He asked what he should do to get us thither? "Drive them along like hogs," said the priest, the officer was our neighbour, a moderate man, and what he did was sore against his will, he came from the priest's house, to ours, and told us what the priest said. So before we were carried to prison, he, the priest, was walking in the steeple-house-yard, where he had a great deal of foolish discourse with some boys that were there at play, too tedious to mention. But the last words were, "He bid one of the boys take a halter and hang himself:" and then he fell down dead. His family being called, brought forth a chair and other things necessary, and lifted him therein and used all means they could, there being many

people about him ; some crying out, "Dont you disturb the old man, but let him go quietly, aye said others, let him depart in peace and dont you disturb him, that his neighbours (the Quakers) may abide at home, and not go to prison." Some of the neighbours came into our shop with joy, and said, "Now you may abide at home, for Mr. Cross is fallen down dead in the church-yard." And he was going mad before, said the mother of one of the boys, for, said she, "He bid my boy take a halter and hang himself." Lord have mercy upon me ! what wicked counsel was that of a minister, said she ; we were in good hopes that his falling down in the pulpit would have been a warning to him, but we see it is not ; but after an hour and an halfs time, he had so much life, as that he called them that were about him rogues. So they carried him in his chair, to his bed, where he remained some days, and died ; but never sensible, as I was informed by several. But we were carried to pri-

son before he died, where we had such entertainment and hard usage as follows.

Our keeper Giles Bale, and his wife, put us in the common jail, with three felons, that were condemned to be hanged, and would not afford us straw to lie upon, though we would have paid for it; they locked us up, and carried away the key with them, they living some distance from the prison, thereby to prevent the under-keeper from shewing us any favour: and the head keeper's wife said, "There let them be, like a company of rogues and whores together; if I had a worse place, I would put them therein."\*

And truly that was a most dismal place, where we had neither stock nor stone to sit upon; nor any resting place to lean against, but the black stone wall, covered over with soot, and the damp cold ground to lie upon. But before we lay down, three of our friends that were prisoners in the room adjoining to that

\* Note, This keeper and his wife soon after died, and their family came to ruin.

we were in, put through the grates in unto us four dust or chaff pillows, and two blankets, and a little straw, whereon we lay down, like a flock of sheep in a pen, in that very cold winter, that we never had the like since I had a remembrance ; where most of us took our rest very sweetly. But when I lay down in that dismal place, it came into my heart a consideration of these things ; saying in my heart, “ Lord thou knowest for what we are exposed to this hardship, it is because we cannot betray our testimony, nor wrong our conscience, nor deal treacherously with our own souls. And seeing it is so, Lord, be thou our comfort in this needful time ; for it is thy presence, that makes hard things easy, and bitter things sweet ; and thou hast sweetened the waters of a bitter cup. Oh ! thou physician of value, that can strengthen both soul and body, be with us this night, and all the nights and days that we have to live in this world.” Then the Lord was pleased to open my heart unto him, and to fill it with his living mercy,

and comfortable presence, insomuch that it overflowed my whole heart, that I could have sung aloud of the goodness of the Lord, and of his mercies and blessings bestowed upon us. But looking over my fellow prisoners, and seeing them so sound asleep, I did forbear to open my mouth; but in the morning there came many people to the prison door, to see how many of us were dead with our hard fare; some of them were sure as they said, that I was dead, for I looked as if I would not live until the morning. But then finding us all alive and well, they confessed and said, "Surely we were the people of God, if there were any." That being the first day, we had a meeting in the prison, and many friends came there, where we had a very good meeting, and the good presence of the Lord was with us, and filled our hearts with joy and gladness, insomuch that I was constrained to praise the name of the Lord, and magnify his power, and to testify in the hearing of many people, that we were so far from repenting our com-



ing there, that we had great cause to give glory, honour and praises to the Lord God of heaven and earth, for that he had found us worthy to suffer for his name and truth; for his powerful presence was with us, and sanctified our afflictions, and made the prison like a palace unto us; and would not change our state, for all the glory of the world, if it were proffered unto us.

This, and much more ran through me, which I shall omit for brevity sake: but in a word, great was the goodness and mercy of the Lord towards us from day to day; that I have sometimes said, surely the Lord is honouring his people, he is weaning of them from this world. It seemed to me as if I had no habitation but the prison: then was the time for the Lord to reveal his secrets unto his children, that he had tried and proved in such things; for it was faithfulness that rendered the faithful servant acceptable in his master's sight, and caused him to say, "Well done thou good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful in a



little, be thou ruler over much." For I cannot believe, that he that is not true in a little, will ever be made ruler over much : no, no, therefore keep to truth in all things, and to the plain language, and teach your children so to do. And as I have said, in that time of great afflictions and sufferings, and parting of many, wife from husband, and husband from wife, and both from tender children ; then was the Lord pleased to reveal his secrets unto his children. And seeing the goodness of the Lord from day to day, and being made sensible of his gathering arm from day to day, a great concern came upon me for many careless ones, that had deprived themselves of that blessed benefit that our souls enjoyed with the Lord. Oh ! in consideration of them and their deplorable state, my soul hath often been poured forth before the Lord, crying, " O Lord, that they may come and partake with us of thy great mercies, as we do from day to day." Then it would often-times come up before me, the great

dishonour they had brought upon the Lord, and his blessed truth, by their unfaithfulness, and unbelief. Yea, great dishonour indeed, they could not trust the Lord, as if he had no power or strength to preserve them. Then I cried, O Lord, many are weak, and feeble, and the cruelty of men hath been great, terrible, and desperately wicked; and thou hast suffered them to be very cruel, to the astonishment of many; insomuch that many a poor soul hath been tossed as with a tempest; and for want of keeping to that blessed guide and rock Christ Jesus, who alone was able to give them boldness and courage to go through the work of this day of affliction, many a poor one hath fallen, not knowing they should be deprived of so great a reward that we have, and do enjoy; blessed be thy holy name for ever. And Lord, thou knowest that my heart is pained within me, my soul is in travail, and my bowels are rolling towards the poor and the distressed, the tossed with tempests, and not comforted; the enemy of their

souls is busy to cast them down, and to fill their minds with trouble and unbelief, always casting before them their unfaithfulness, and would fain keep them in bondage, and from returning unto thee by true repentance, that thou mayest heal their backslidings, and teach them to be more faithful for time to come. O Lord! what shall I do for them? They are often in my remembrance; Lord, open my heart in prayer more and more, and bow thy ear to the supplication of thy servant, as thou hast done many times; and accept of the prayer of thy servant, for them who cannot pray for themselves. O Lord! if it may stand with thy blessed will, once more afford them a day of visitation, and try them again. O Lord, deal not with them according to their deserts; but, Lord, I pray thee, have compassion on the works of thy hands, and remember poor mortals this day; for surely many of them are greatly distressed, and compassed about with many temptations, and my heart is pained for them. And in this

mournful state, the Lord was pleased to speak comfortably unto me in the secret of my heart, in a living spring of life, and said, "The time of the deliverance of my people draweth near, and nearer than many are aware of; though I have suffered their enemies for a time to triumph over them, yet too many have grown high and lofty, and forgotten the days of their distress and calamity, and what state they were in when I first found them out; as it were without hope: then did I send forth my light and my truth, which many received with thankfulness of heart, and with a ready mind, and bowed thereunto, and yielded obedience for a time. But after I had confounded their enemies, and appeared for their deliverance, and enriched them greatly, then they forgot the days of their distress and poverty, and the many promises which they made unto me in the day when they were sorely beset with many enemies, within and without. But since I have appeared for them, and confounded their foes, and have done more

for them, than they looked for, or expected at my hands, how have they forgotten to pay their vows unto me, that many of them made unto me in the days of their distress! And how far are they gone into old Israel's sins? Nay, have not some so much lost their senses, as to put light for darkness, and darkness for light? But blessed are all they who continue truly humble, for my covenant is firm, forever established, and never to be altered with my remnant that have been faithful, that have parted with all that I have called for, for my name and truth's sake; and who have had no helper in the earth but me, nor none to lean upon, nor to confide in, but the arm of my power; who could not turn to the right hand nor to the left, unless I went before them. Oh these are mine, and my secrets shall be with them, they shall be found worthy to stand in the gap, and to intercede for the people; notwithstanding their poverty, and the nothingness of themselves; yet they shall be as instruments in my hand, to proclaim my

dreadful day, and the day of my vengeance amongst the people, that many may hear, and fear, and turn unto me by true repentance, that I may heal their backslidings, and receive them freely. And in order thereunto, I will bring a day of deliverance for my people, and many of them shall praise my name, and tell of my wonderous works, and what I have done for them, that others may be encouraged to be faithful the residue of their days, for I have seen many bemoaning themselves in desolation, and sorely bewailing their lost condition: for many have been made desolate, by reason of the cruelty of the wicked one; and they being desolate, have mourned unto me, and I have seen the bemoaning of my people; and I have seen the travails of the faithful, for the unfaithful, and for the cries of the poor, and the sighings of the needy, will I arise, and I will work a way for the deliverance of my people; for the time is near that the prison shall not enclose them, but they shall come forth, and declare



and publish my wonderful works; for I will work, and none shall be able to hinder; and many shall proclaim my dreadful day, and the day of my vengeance; that many may hear and fear, and return unto the Lord by true repentance."

Oh, this was the glad tidings that livingly lived with me night and day in the time of my confinement: oh, it was great satisfaction to my travailing soul, it answered the very petition that many times I had put up in the night season unto the living God, everlasting honour, glory and renown be given unto him that liveth for evermore, saith my soul. For surely I cannot but admire the wonderful loving-kindness, and mercies, and favours of the Lord our God, the high and holy one that inhabits eternity, in condescending to the poor, and to the low, and the little; he hath revealed his secrets to many who have not thought themselves worthy to be made partakers of so great a benefit; but their greatest concern hath been for the redemption of their souls from under Satan's power;

now Lord preserve me in thy fear forever, and keep me from sinning against thee, that my soul may not go into captivity again.

This was the chief concern of my spirit, in the time of my great afflictions, in the passage out of Egypt's land, and through the wilderness, where I met with many straits, and great hardships, and many enemies; and many crooked ways, and bye-paths that the enemy of my soul had cast up to catch my feet in; but the Lord in his infinite goodness, who never failed his children that sought him, above all things, provided a way for me to escape his snares, as he did his Israel in former days, glory be given unto his holy name forever. This was part of the exercise during the time of my confinement with my husband, and many more of the servants of the most high God, in Ivelchester goal. And when the time drew near of our deliverance, when I came out of the prison, to go to the sessions held at Brewton, I assuredly believed that the time was near

(that lived in my heart) that the prison should not enclose us any longer, though it was altogether unlikely; for our persecutors were exceedingly wicked against us, although our grand persecutor the priest, was at that time taken off in a very remarkable manner, as before mentioned; notwithstanding many remained that were very cruel, and acted cruelly and unjustly against us; and put by the jury that were chosen of our neighbours, and called another jury presently in the court, such as they thought most fit for their turns. Then the clerk began, and read an indictment, viz. "That we were found, or taken at an unlawful assembly, in force of arms, in contempt of the king, and his laws, crown and dignity, to the terror of the people," &c. And he said to the jury, "Gentlemen, you have heard their indictment, if you find them guilty, you find for the king." And a bishop that sat upon the bench with the judge, stood up and said, "That the first Quaker that ever was in England, was hanged for being one concerned in

the Popish plot." I answered, that the first that was called a Quaker, was now alive. He said again, "He could prove by sufficient witness that he was hanged for being one in the Popish plot." Then the bishop being enraged, by reason he was contradicted, held up his hand towards us, and bid us "Have a care what we said, for them that had estates amongst us, it should cost them their estates, and them that had not should lie in prison until they perished." Such was their great rage, and wickedness against us, that it was very grievous to hear them; but there was a secret cry many times ran through my heart unto the Lord, "Lord, work for thy name sake, and confound their wisdom, and rage, and bring down their proud and wicked spirits, and bring to nought their mischievous contrivance, that they have been contriving against thy innocent people, as they have been making themselves merry, and drinking wine to the full, and feeding themselves with the fatness of the earth, as Dives did, and have what

their hearts lust after, and yet none of all these things will give them content, nor satisfaction; no, no, but the destruction of a poor despised people: oh, Lord, make thy power known this day, and that which will make most for thy honour, and the prosperity of thy blessed truth, do thou bring to pass this day; that it may be known that there is a God, in heaven, that can rule the hearts of the children of men; and make them to know that there is a God, whom all men ought to fear, honour and obey."

And surely the Lord was pleased to hear the prayers of his children, and to answer the request of them in the days of their afflictions; for this jury, whom they chose, as they thought, most fit for the work, was long absent; but when they came with their verdict, the foreman could not readily speak, but looked much like a dead man. Then the bishop in a rage, asked him, "Whether we were guilty or not guilty?" he answered, "Guilty of not going to church, but not of a riot." Of not going to church, said

the bishop, that is not the matter in hand, guilty of a riot you mean. Then the rest of the jury said, "No, my Lord, guilty of not going to church, but not of a riot." You mean of an unlawful assembly then. "Yes," said the foreman; "Why that is a riot in law," said the bishop. Then I answered, "We are no rioters:" then the cryer of the court shook his white rod over my head, and said, "Be silent." I said, "No, we may not be silent, we are a sober people, and live a good life and conversation; we do unto all men, as we would be done by: I never wronged man, woman, nor child, and I know none that have ought against us, unless for the answer of a good conscience; here are of our neighbours that can testify for us." The cryer continued shaking his white rod over my head, crying, "Hush, and be silent." Then one of the justices, a sober ancient man, said, "Let the woman alone to speak for herself, she speaketh truth, and reason, let more of them speak; you are many against them, and



if they may not be suffered to speak for themselves, it is very hard." That a little stopped the rage of the bishop and judge; then they called to our keeper to take us away, and to bring us when they called for us again; so they went to their dinner, and we with our keeper. But no sooner were they gone, but a great concern fell upon me to follow them; I could neither eat nor drink; but was pressed in my spirit to go after them; and when I came, they were sitting down to their dinner, with a noise of music playing at the going up of their dishes, which were very many of the choicest things. I went in amongst them whilst they were at dinner, but I did not see a fit opportunity, but waited till they had dined: and as they were rising, I came in with a great dread and awe over my spirit. One of the great men came to me, and said, "Good woman, who would you speak withal?" I said, the judge of the sessions: he said, "I am the judge, if you have any thing to say, I am ready to hear you." But

he not being the man that sat upon the bench that day, I said, "Thou art not the man I am going unto." Then he turned towards the judge that sat that day, and said, "This woman has something to say to you." Then one of the justices laid his hand upon my shoulder, and said, "Let this good woman have what she will to say, we will hear her." But I getting near to the judge and bishop, that sat at the upper end of the table, said, "Forasmuch as you are all here, that sat in judgment against us this day, I have a concern upon my spirit in vindication of our innocency: we are well known amongst our neighbours to be a sober and an honest people, that live a good life and conversation; we do no wrong to any, we can do good to them that hate us, and pray for them that despitefully use us. I know of none that has ought against us, but concerning the law of our God; notwithstanding all this, we are numbered amongst transgressors, and have been turned into the common goal amongst felons, our trades

and families lie liable to be ruined, and all these things shall not befall us, but you shall understand thereof; for I am here this day to testify the truth of it; for which the just and righteous God will one day plead: and as sure as the day gives its light, and the covenant of the day and night cannot be broken, there is not a man here, nor any that draw breath in the open air, that shall escape the tribunal seat of God's divine justice, a sentence of a just recompence of reward every one shall receive for their deeds done in their life time, whether they be good or evil."

And I can truly say, the dread of the Lord was upon me, insomuch that they were smitten, and paleness appeared in their faces, and they had not a word to say. But when I was going forth, some hectoring young man said, "I thought it would be so when this woman came in; I thought she would preach when the spirit moved her; but why would you suffer her (said he to the man of the house) to disturb your guests?" Then

he said, "Get you down stairs, or I will throw you down." I turned in again, and said, "What wrong have I done unto any one here, if I could have kept my conscience clear in staying away, I had not been here this day; but whether you will hear or forbear, I shall be clear in the day of account of all your blood." So I left them, and returned to my place, and had great peace with the Lord; but we were not called into court any more that day; but the morrow morning early, we were called to come into court, in order to finishing our trial, but the bishop came no more into the court, that we saw, or knew of; and the judge was very moderate that day: a great change indeed! He only called to the keeper to bring up the Quakers, and called some of us by name, and said, "You that stand here indicted, the court fines you five shillings a-piece;" and never spake a word of payment of the money, but broke up the court, their business being done, and went their way, and our keeper also left us, to our great admira-

tion : above fourscore prisoners that were before them that day were freed.

After dinner, the cryer came in amongst us where we were, and said, " Neighbours and friends, I am glad for your release ; you are the people of God, men would ruin you, but God will not suffer them so to do." And said, " Where is the woman ?" I said, " Here am I," he said, " The Lord bless you, I pray you forgive me, for I intended no harm, nor would not do any thing against you ; though I shook my rod over your head, I did it in no evil towards you, so I hope my honest neighbours and friends, you will forgive me." We answered, " Yes, freely ;" and were very loving to him, and desired his well being forever. He went his way in much love, praying God to bless us, and we returned to our habitations, with the peace of the Lord in our bosoms ; everlasting praises be given unto the Lord our God for evermore.

Now my children, the end and aim of my leaving this to you, and all upon re-

cord, is, that future ages may know that the great God of heaven and earth, that brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt's bondage, that made the water stand on heaps, and brought his children through, on dry land, and overturned Pharaoh and all his host: he it is that is our God, in whom we have believed, and his power is not lessened, that he cannot save, nor his arm shortened, that it cannot deliver, this day, as in former days, praises to his name forever.

This, my dear children, you know is certainly true; but for you and all others to keep in remembrance these and all other mercies that the Lord our God hath bestowed upon us, ever since he gathered us to be a people, which is eight and thirty years ago; for I was in the nineteenth year of my age, when John Camm and John Audland came first to Bristol, in the dread and power of the great God of heaven and earth; and I am a living witness that his powerful presence was with them, and made their ministry so dreadful, that it pierced the



hearts of thousands. Oh, the dread and terror that seized upon my heart, at the sound of John Audland's voice, and the sight of him, before I rightly understood what he said. But before the meeting was over, the spirit of the Lord moved in my heart, and in the life I came to see my woeful and deplorable state, which made me cry to God for mercy ; a day never to be forgotten by me. And now I have arrived to the seven and fiftieth year of my age. Oh ! the many deliverances, both inward and outward, which I have been made a living witness of. The many decrees that have been sealed against us, the many threatenings of ruin and destruction which have been sounded in our ears, how have we been as killed all the day long, and counted as sheep for the slaughter, and yet behold we are alive to this day, to praise the Lord. How have the enemies roared, both inwardly and outwardly, and have come with open mouth to devour at once ! And how hath our God helped us ! The great God of heaven and earth is he that hath been our

strength in a needful time; and hath sustained his people by the strength of his arm, and hath borne up our heads above the waters, that they have not drowned nor overturned us to this very day, everlasting honour be given unto the Lord forever. But our enemies hath he overturned, and broken their bands asunder, and hath made them to bow under his dreadful power, and hath taken many off in his displeasure. Oh! what shall I say in the behalf of all these his wondrous works, that mine eyes have seen; but more especially the inward work of regeneration. Oh! my tongue is not able to demonstrate the tenth part of it, that the Lord hath been pleased to bring me through. Oh! what shall I say at the remembrance of them, all which at this time is livingly come up before me; but bow before the Lord, and prize his mercies for evermore.

And now my dear children, keep faithful to the Lord, and his blessed truth, that you have been trained up in, and your eyes shall see for yourselves, as

mine eyes have for myself; be faithful to the motion of the spirit of Christ Jesus in your own bosoms, and dont you overlook the little things, for they that be not faithful in a little, shall never be made ruler over much. Therefore dont you exercise yourselves in any matter too high for you, but mind the motion of the spirit in your own hearts, and hearken diligently to the voice of the Lord, that your souls may live; and keep the Lord always in your remembrance, that you sin not against him; and remember to keep to the daily cross, which will crucify all the motions of the flesh, and keep you alive to God, and near unto him; and in so doing, you will know his counsel; and seek the kingdom of heaven, and the righteousness thereof, above all things in this world, and other things shall be added unto you; for I will assure you this is the way that my soul hath travailed in, and hath found favour with God, and one thing more that I have experienced, which hath been of moment unto me, that in all my afflictions, and

pain and sorrow of body or mind, I have not had an eye to confide in man, but have applied my heart to the Lord, and have poured forth my soul unto him. Oh! thou physician of value, that can cure both soul and body; thou that knows better how to administer to my necessity, than I can ask of thee; from thee alone do I look for comfort, for there is none besides thee, that can administer true comfort, to me. And the Lord in his due time, hath appeared to my comfort, and satisfaction, and hath established my goings, and hath kept my feet from falling and my heart from going astray, unto this very day; everlasting honour be given unto his name for evermore, Amen.

And since I have seen the good effects of my labour and travail, I earnestly beg of the Lord night and day, to do for you, as he hath done for me. Oh! how hath my prayers ascended unto the Lord in public and in private, and in my concerns, when my hand hath been at my labour, and on the high way side. Oh! my children, let it not be in vain, for I can

truly say, that you have been the children for whom many prayers have been offered.

Therefore consider it, when I am gone from you, and can no longer watch over you, for my time is much over I have no long time here on this side the grave, but I shall be gone, and see you no more in this world, nor take more care for you, nor give more counsel : therefore have I written this little account of part of my travels out of Egypt's bondage, towards the land of rest and peace ; which have been through great difficulties, and through many a sore combat with the enemy of my soul's peace, many a fiery trial, and through a vale of tears ; but dont you be discouraged at it, for you know how wonderfully the great God of heaven and earth hath been my support in time of need, and hath borne up my spirit, and given me more strength than I could have believed, if it had been declared unto me. And now I seeing so many professors of truth at this day, going on at such an easy rate, and so care-

less, and so indifferent, so slighting the cross, and so little regarding the travail of their soul's, and so little concerned for their soul's good, and so slighting the testimonies of truth, and spending their precious time and season that God hath put into their hands : as if heaven's glory and a state of eternity were not worth the looking after ; and as if there was no God to punish for these things, nor any day of account.

Oh! the consideration of these things hath been weighty upon my spirit for many months, and morning and evening hath my heart been afflicted, saying within myself, " Lord what will become of such, I fear the visitation of many of them is almost over ; oh ! how does my soul lament for them ; and I have the greater concern upon my spirit, to intercede with the Lord to preserve me and mine forever. O Lord, my soul is concerned, and my heart is bowed at this time in the sense and feeling of thy everlasting love, and mercies and blessings that thou hast bestowed upon me a poor



distressed object, till thou took pity on me, and looked on me in the days of my distress, and spread a skirt over me. And now in consideration of this thy great love which thou shewedst unto me when I was bemoaning myself like a silly dove without a mate; or like a mournful widow, or like a sparrow upon the house top, that is sitting alone. Oh! when it comes up before me, Lord how is my heart broken, and how is my spirit melted, and how doth my soul love the Lord, and desire for evermore to obey his voice, and to bow to his sceptre, and keep covenant with him, and dwell and abide with him forever; that I may be kept fruitful all my days.

“And, now oh Lord my God seeing thou hast been pleased thus to deal with me, and to have a regard to the low estate of thy handmaid, and hast heard my prayers, and answered many a time: O Lord! if I have found favour in thy sight, this once more hear my petition this evening, and grant me my request. And Lord, thou who hast kept me all my life long,

to this very day, bless my children, by preserving of them in thy fear, cause them to remember thy mercies, and thy blessings from year to year, and from day to day; and cause them to remember what thou hast done for them, and their father and mother, in the days of their great affliction, when destruction and ruin were determined against us, and when we were almost past hope, how hast thou appeared, and confounded our enemies before our eyes? Lord, let these things never be forgotten by me, nor them, whilst we have a day to live upon the earth: but, O Lord, I pray thee bless and sanctify all these thy blessings and mercies bestowed upon us, and give us a thankful heart, and humble mind, and more and more unite us unto thee, and cause us to walk worthy of the same. Oh! that my heart was but worthy enough; for methinks my heart is not able to set forth thy praises enough: No, surely it is impossible for tongue to declare thy infinite goodness, and thy noble acts. But, Lord, we who have

made our choice of thee, and have believed in thy Son Christ Jesus, have known him to be sufficient strength in time of need; and we who have known thy holy arm to be made bare, for the deliverance of us out of thralldom and captivity, have known it sufficient to preserve us to this very day. Therefore, O Lord, strengthen my faith, hope and confidence, that I may stedfastly believe that thou wilt preserve my children, when I am gone to my resting place. Lord, keep my family and thy people, let not one of them be lost, or a prey to the wicked one: oh Lord, if thou shouldest yet add more days to my life, let me not cease to pray for them, and their offspring, that I may do my endeavour for their entrance into thy blessed kingdom, so shall I go to my grave in peace. And now, O Lord, I do wholly resign them into thy hands, as knowing right well thou art able to keep them through faith, and preserve them all their days, and to do more for them than I am able to ask of thee. Oh Lord,

whatever exercise they meet withal, strengthen them, and bear up their spirits, that they may not be overcome with the temptations of the wicked one : for, Lord, thy power hath been sufficient to redeem my soul. So Lord, once more do I commit the keeping of my spirit to thee, with my children, and all thy flock and family upon the face of the whole earth, with whom my soul is at peace, and in unity ; and do feel the renewings of thy love at this time, which is the greatest comfort that can be here enjoyed ; therefore does my heart, soul and spirit, and all that is within me, return unto thee, O Lord, all praises, glory and honour, with hearty thanksgiving, and pure obedience for evermore. Lord, accept of it this evening, as an evening sacrifice from a broken heart, and a contrite spirit, which thou never rejected : for surely, O Lord, thou art worthy of it, from this time forth, forever, and for evermore, Amen.

This was finished the 13th day of the  
2d Month, 1692. By me,

*Elizabeth Stirredge, Sen.*

**T**he last fourteen years of her life after this, she lived at Hempstead in Hartfordshire, whither her husband removed, with her and family, from Chew-magna, in the county of Somerset, in the year 1688. And did not travel much abroad in her latter days; except once or twice to Bristol, &c. and usually to the yearly-meeting at London, once a year; but laboured mostly about home, as she grew aged and weakly; but often as the Lord afforded her strength, visited the neighbouring meetings in the same county; and her service therein tended to the edifying and comforting of God's heritage, as many faithful friends in those parts can bear witness. And great was her concern for the meeting she belonged to, which she frequented so long as she was able; many times going to it through

great weakness, and many living and powerful testimonies (especially towards her latter end) did she bear in it, exhorting friends to faithfulness; frequently declaring and setting forth the wonderful power that attended friends in the beginning (and which still doth all the faithful) of which she often spoke, and bore testimony to, in the beginning of her last illness, amongst her own family. And so departed this life, and laid down her head in peace with the Lord, at Hempstead aforesaid, on the seventh day of the ninth Month, 1706, in the 72d year of her age.





*A SALUTATION of my endeared love, in God's holy fear and dread, and for the clearing of my conscience, once more unto you of that city of Bristol, amongst whom my soul hath some years travelled under many a dreadful exercise, which hath made my bones to shake, and my heart to tremble before the great God of heaven and earth, who will yet further bring his notable day, wherein all flesh shall tremble before him.*

AND now in the sense of the great love of God that hath been extended unto you of that city continually; first, in sending of his servants amongst you, and enduing them with power from on high, that it brought effectually upon many whereby they were brought out of Egypt's darkness, and through the Red Sea spiritually, and could sing to the

Lord, as Moses and the children of Israel did, when the Lord had wrought wonderfully for their deliverance, and by a high hand and a wonderful power brought them forth: and blessed be the Lord God almighty, and honoured be his worthy name, and the right arm of his strength there are many living witnesses of these things in this our day. Oh, dear friends! forget it not, but dwell low in the sense of the deplorable states that you were in, when first the Lord reached unto you, and opened that eye in you, that let you see you were undone forever, if the Lord did not arise for your deliverance, when many cried out, "A saviour, or else I perish forever." O friends! what was too dear for us to part with in that day for the Lord? Truly can my soul say, "That all that ever my eyes beheld, was nothing to me in comparison to my soul's redemption." Oh! it was precious in my eye, and to this very day the living remembrance of it dwells fresh upon my spirit at this time, and my heart and soul loveth the Lord, and blesseth his worthy

name forever and for evermore. And now the Lord is remembering the covenant that many made with him in the days of their distress. Oh! remember, remember to pay your vows to the Lord; and look into your hearts this day, and with the light of the Lord search and see, whether you are in covenant this day with the Lord, or no? If you are, surely you are not this day to serve yourselves, but the living God, that made you for a purpose of his own glory, and redeemed you with his precious blood.

And now consider, you that are at ease in your Sion, and eating and drinking, and wearing what seemeth desirable in your own eyes, notwithstanding the honour of the Lord lies engaged, and your souls in great danger, and the servants of the Lord distressed on your behalf: oh! for the Lord's sake, and for your own souls' sake, which will perish, if you do not speedily repent, and arise and strip yourselves, and shake yourselves from these things and come away, while the call of the Lord lasteth: oh! linger not,

for the day of the Lord hasteneth mightily, let nothing hinder you, make no excuses any longer, lest you be excluded out of God's kingdom, and the door be shut against you: oh! think upon it, before the midnight cry come, wherein not one day more will be afforded to work for the Lord: oh then! neither wife nor children, lands nor livings, husband nor trade, gold nor silver will redeem one soul; then that doleful sentence will be sounded against the rebellious, "Depart ye workers of iniquity, into everlasting torment, prepared for the devil and his angels." Oh, the sense of these things lie very heavy upon my spirit, and truly bows my heart in reverence before the Lord, and morning and evening is my heart afflicted, insomuch that I can say, as the prophet said, "Oh! that my head were as water, and mine eyes as a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night, for the unfaithful, that my spirit might be eased:" for truly, friends, though I am the least amongst many thousands of the Lord's people, and a

weak instrument, yet my soul is concerned this day, and my prayers to the great God of heaven and earth are, "That he would be pleased again to arise, and utter his voice, and thunder his alarm from his holy habitation, and make the hearts of people to tremble before his wonderful power, and that he will yet afford a day and try them again, and that his trumpet, may once more sound an alarm, to the awakening of their consciences out of that spiritual slumber, wherein many are sleeping, and dreaming it is well with them, and that they are rich, and fat, and full, and need nothing; when their state is miserable, and wretched, naked and bare, and undone for ever, if they do not speedily repent, and return with their whole hearts, and cry to God for mercy, and that he will pardon their iniquities, and heal their backslidings." Oh backsliding Israel! return, return, before it be too late, for the Lord hath long born with thee. Oh, thou city of Bristol! as the testimony livingly sprung in my heart a little before thy distress came upon



thee, I was constrained to say, " Oh ! thou city of Bristol, a city of the mercies of the living God, he hath highly favoured thee ; thou hast had a day a time, wherein thou mightest have enriched thyself with the treasures of God's kingdom, and mightest have grown strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, whereby thou mightest have stood in a living testimony for the Lord, with one consent, as one man; but now behold, the days of thy distress are at hand and thy calamity hastens like an armed man; and now who can bemoan thee, or who can intercede with the Lord for thee ? Or who can say to the Lord, why hast thou suffered these things to come to pass ? Because it is in his justice he hath done it." And blessed be his name forever, he is fulfilling the prophecies of his servants, whom he hath sent early and late to proclaim his dreadful day in this city, and year after year, and month after month hath the mind and will of the Lord been declared, and messenger after messenger, insomuch many that a full stomach loathed the honey-comb, and all that seemed to receive it, made

not a right use of it; for the Lord's end, in sending his servants in days past, was, that his people might be fitted and prepared, that a judgment, or a destruction should not come upon his children at unawares; but that they should believe the testimonies of his truth, and take warning by it, and amend their lives, and be bowed in spirit, and humbled under the great God of heaven and earth, that your prayers in this state might ascend unto the long provoked God, whose anger is waxen hot, and nothing will appease it, but true repentance, and that with speed, and true brokenness of heart. Oh! is this your state? Or are you this day trampling upon the testimonies of truth, and upon the sufferings of your dear brethren and sisters, that are sufferers this day for the testimony of Jesus, and are cruelly used? Oh! can you forget these things? Come, put your hands to the work, and your shoulders to the burden, and cry mightily unto the Lord to spare a little, and give a little time to renew your strength in him, that you may

do something for the Lord, though but at the last hour; for surely friends, the last hour to many is very near, and the long invited, if they miss of this hour, they will never have another hour to work for the living God; and therefore is my soul concerned, and my heart pained within me, and shortness of time is much before me; and therefore I beg it of you, that you will lay it to heart, before it be too late, and consider how soon the Lord can call for your breath; for our lives are here likened to the flower of the field, as the Lord said to his prophet, when he said, What shall I cry? "Cry, all flesh is grass, and the glory thereof as the flower of the field;" and pray consider, how soon is that withered, and the beauty of it comes to nought? and seeing it is so, why will people run the hazard of their poor souls, for that which will augment their perpetual misery, world without end.

Oh! the Lord grant me my request, and bow his ear to my prayer; for I am very earnest with the Lord, and my

heart is pained within me on your behalf: oh! it is you, it is you that should have been as "Pillars in the house of the Lord," that the weakest might have leaned upon you, that your courage and valour might have appeared in the sight of the weak, that they might have been encouraged by it, that the strong and the weak might have gone up together to the mountain of the house of the Lord, where the Lord would have taught you of his ways, and you might have walked in his paths, and he would have fortified you with might, courage, strength and valour, and your bow would have abode in his strength, so that you would have grown strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, which he would have given unto you in a bountiful manner, had you wholly given up yourselves, and all that he had given you, and gave way to that noble spirit that was in Joshua and Caleb, who were resolved to follow the Lord, they and their families. Oh friends! I can hardly write what ariseth in my heart, as touching this matter;

but in the fear of the Lord, I have this to say, your eyes should have seen the wonders of the Lord, in a miraculous manner, as they did that thus leaned upon the Lord, and trusted in his strength, and believed in him, and then all things were possible; for by obeying of the command of the Lord, the walls of Jericho fell; but if they had reasoned with flesh and blood, or thought the instruments too mean, or consulted with reasoning, they had never seen the power of the Lord to do this work, neither shall any now, that reason with flesh and blood: no, no, first learn obedience, give up to obey the Lord, and then your eyes shall see the blessed work of the Lord to be fulfilled in its due time; for he is God Almighty, and all-sufficient: therefore let every heart confide in his power.

So, dear friends, keep your hearts with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life; for we all well know, that the people that live most chaste, keep nearest to the Lord, and they that are nearest, hear most of his counsel: and

truly friends, the time is at hand, when all shall be distressed for the Lord's will, and the most faithful cannot spare of the heavenly oil, then it will be too late for any to go to buy. Oh! it often riseth in my heart, that yet a little time, and time unto many will be no more, for which my soul is more concerned, than for any outward suffering; for surely, friends, it is in my heart to believe, that the great God of heaven and earth, who hath been long provoked, and tried many ways, and shaken his rod over this nation many times, and nothing will prevail, therefore will he arise in his strength, and go through this nation, and will afflict the inhabitants thereof, he will bring terror and amazement upon them, that none shall be able to deliver out of his hand; for he hath long called, and they have not regarded; he hath long held out his hand, and they have not laid it to heart, and therefore will their calamity come at a day unawares; and because they have not regarded the call of the Lord, when they cry aloud to him, he




will not regard them ; oh ! then blessed eternally, and happy for evermore will all those be, that have obeyed the Lord in their day, and have not their portion with the wicked.


So with my endeared love unto you,  
and that beyond utterance, desiring and praying for your soul's prosperity, I remain your loving friend,

ELIZABETH STIRREDGE.

The 2d day of the 1st  
Month, 1683.



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